

OF ALIEN KINGS AND ANCESTRAL CHIEFS



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OF ALIEN KINGS AND ANCESTRAL CHIEFS

An Essay on the Ideology of Kingship Among the Aruwund

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To my parents,
in memory of their first two years
in Africa when I was not yet born...

To my brothers and sister.

ABSTRACT

OF ALIEN KINGS AND ANCESTRAL CHIEFS

This thesis is organized as a set of essays which tackle various theoretical issues pertaining to an understanding of the ideology of kingship among the Aruwund (Lunda of the *Mwant Yaav*) of southern Zaïre.

Following an introductory text which supplies the historical background, the thesis begins with the description and analysis of the Ruwund myth of foundation of the state. The myth is here seen as a "constellation of myths", a set of minor narratives relating to high office which constitute, define and permanently re-create the "main myth". It is this fluidity of oral tradition that is examined by demonstrating how episodes and minor title histories are evoked or omitted by narrators who display different emphases of the myth and attempt to manipulate a repertoire to their better advantage (ch. I). Through reconstructing this process, and the "contradictory versions" which it originates, we are drawn into the academic debate that has long opposed structuralists to ethnohistorians in the analysis of oral traditions (ch. I/II).

Chapter II reviews the concept of the "culture hero" as used in the literature on the recurrent central African image of the alien hunter, founder of a new civilization. It suggests that the Ruwund myth of the origin of kingship should be understood as a tale of social *renewal* rather than that of the introduction of a *foreign* civilization in the midst of a more rudimentary order. This being so, the foundation of the state is a process

generating *from within* in which the role of the autochthonous order as bearer of "culture" should be considered attentively.

In the three chapters that follow I discuss the system of "perpetual kinship" (as defined by I. Cunnison in 1956), issues on hierarchy, and the symbolic use of space. All three chapters can be seen to reveal mechanisms of establishing, creating and encoding symbolic relationships relating to the Ruwund ideology of kingship. In the first of these chapters (ch. III) it is argued that perpetual kinship ties among Ruwund dignitaries, notwithstanding the use of a kinship idiom, are above all metaphors for *symbolic* relationships. The following chapter analyses the salutation system and the use of insignia of power among court officials and questions L. Dumont's assertion that hierarchy constitutes the "ideology" in traditional societies. Finally, chapter V looks at royal and minor courts as "constructed spaces" within which relations between dignitaries are both shaped and acted out through relative positionings.

The last two chapters are concerned with royal ritual. It is intended to contribute to Africanist literature a detailed ethnographic account of the Ruwund royal installation ritual (ch. VI). The following chapter claims that its understanding can only be attained by examining a wider structure of rituals and with reference, in particular, to *non-royal* symbolism and ceremonies.

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NOTE ON THE ORTHOGRAPHY OF RUWUND WORDS

The Ruwund language, called "Uruwund" by the native speakers, is a language belonging to the Central Western Zone L in Guthrie's classification of Bantu languages (1967). In this classification Uruwund (L. 53) belongs to the Lunda group (L.50) which also includes two other languages, the Salampasu and the Lunda (Lunda-Ndembu). Although I have taken into account the writings of A. Lerbak (n.d.), J. L. Vincke (1966) and J. J. Hoover (1976) as regards the orthography of Ruwund words, I have strictly followed that suggested by J. Nash in his very recent grammar (1993), with one single exception: while Nash adopts *ñ* for the phonetic realization of [ɲ] as pronounced in Spanish words such as *español* (not unlike in English "knew"), I conformed with the **ny** of the International African Alphabet commonly used in the current anthropological literature. Below are summarized a few major rules concerning the pronunciation of vowels and consonants in Uruwund as specified in Nash's work. Exceptions to such rules are only mentioned should they be relevant for the reading of this dissertation.

1. The pronunciation of vowels:

The Ruwund vowel **a** ([a]) is pronounced between "father" and "bat", vowel **i** ([i]) approximately as in "feet", **u** ([u]) as in "boot", **o** ([o]) as in "tote" and **e** (between [e] and [ɛ]) is pronounced between "snake" and "bet".

The pronunciation of these vowels changes in certain combinations with other vowels or consonants. Such is the case, for example, of **u** in a sequence **ru** when it may be pronounced as [ɪ] (between "boot" and "bit"). Hence the word **rukan** ("sacred bracelet") should be pronounced [ɾɪkan], or even [ɾʁkan] with a prolonged "roll" of the **r**.

Word-initial **u** is optionally pronounced with an initial [w] as in **Uruwund** [Wuruwu:nd];

and word-final **u** is always devoiced or "whispered".

Vowels in Uruwund may be of long or short duration. Long vowels are here represented by two letters. For example **maaku** ("mother/aunt") should be pronounced [ma:ku]. However, when preceding a nasal-obstruent or nasal-nasal consonant cluster in the same word (such as **mb**, **mp**, **nv**, **nd**, **ndj**, **nz**, **nk**, **ng**, etc.), *all* vowels are long and therefore it is unnecessary to mark their length with double letters (e.g. **Nakabamb** [Nakaba:mb]). Also, mid vowels (**e** and **o**) are nearly always long in Uruwund and, therefore, this orthography shall economize by writing them with a single letter (e.g. **mes**, "eyes", should be pronounced as [me:s]). Where the irregular short **e** or **o** are found (in most cases borrowings from other languages) this is indicated by a tag placed under the vowel (e.g. **Cełek** on pages 179,181 should be read [ce:lek]).

2. The pronunciation of consonants:

Consonants should be pronounced much like their English equivalents except for the cases specified below:

Ruwund **j** ([ʒ]) has the sound of **s** in English "pleasure" or "leisure"; **c** ([č]) has the value of **ch** as in "church"; and **dj** is equivalent to the English consonant **j**. The Ruwund **r** is "rolled" like **rr** in the Spanish word *perro*; and **w**, which is usually pronounced as in English, may not be articulated when it occurs between consonants **m** or **k** and vowels **o** or **u** (like in **mwon**, "medicine", which is often pronounced as [mo:n]). Finally, as already pointed out, **ny** stands for [ɲ] like the **ny** in English "canyon". Hence the Ruwund word **Nkalaany** should be read as [Nkala:ɲ].

When the consonants **t**, **d**, **s** and **z** precede **u** or **w**, their pronunciation changes into that of labialized retroflex affricates. The pronunciation of **t** and **d** when followed by **u** or **w** will thus resemble English **ch** as in "church" and **j** as in "John", if only approximately so. The retroflex

sounds of **s** and **z** when followed by **u** or **w** may be said to resemble roughly English **s** or **sh**. In this latter case articulations are accompanied by much aspiration and may produce a whistling sound.

Exceptions to the above rule are marked by an apostrophe between the letters. Hence the **t** in **taat'uku** ("father/great grandfather") is pronounced like a "normal" **t**.

The combination **ng** is always pronounced in Uruwund as [ŋ] but with a mute **g** as in English "sing". Hence **ngaak** ("grandparent/ancestor") should be pronounced as [ŋ:-a:k]. Finally, **m** and **n** preceding another consonant at the beginning of a word are realized with short hums (as in **Nkond**, [N-ko:nd]).

3. Other remarks on orthography and abbreviations:

Uruwund is a tonal language and words may differ only with respect to the voice pitch employed when pronouncing them. To simplify both the writing and the reading of the text, however, I have omitted them except on page 180, note 4, in which tone marking became indispensable to distinguish two words with otherwise equal spelling.

Perpetual titles are in italic throughout the text in order to differentiate from personal names (e.g. *Nswaan Murund* is an office title; Ruwej is an individual name). Ruwund villages often have the name of their chief's title. The office title is in italic while the village name remains in normal type (e.g. Kasaaku is the name of a settlement at the Nkalaany area, while *Kasaaku* is the perpetual title of the village chief).

Besides standard abbreviations I use **v.:** throughout the text to indicate that the following word is a verb in the infinitive form (e.g. **v.:** *kwiiufukwiil*, "to greet a chief by clapping one's hands"). This same indication also appears linked to the verb form itself in Ruwund sentences such as *kwiiipan(v.) mpemb* ("to rub on white kaolin").

INTRODUCTION

I

The Lunda kingdom of the *Mwant Yaav* enters our historical scene in the context of the major Portuguese enterprise of crossing Africa from coast to coast. At the outset this venture was viewed as advantageous in linking Angola to the gold mines of the Monomotapa empire (located in the highlands between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers) but was faced with only too vague a knowledge of the width of the African continent. From those beginnings in early 17th century the idea of linking the African coasts was to represent a major trend in Portuguese exploration of Central Africa for the next two hundred years.

It was not until the mid-18th century, however, that we first hear of the Lunda state. Correia Leitão, who was sent on a surveying mission by the governor of Angola, collected information on the remote interior lands at the court of the *Kasanje*, chief of the Imbangala (cf. Santos, 1978:150-1). This preliminary expedition became only too aware of the expanse from coast to coast and the hardship of an enterprise which aimed at establishing an overland link between the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique. Subsequently the project was revived intermittently and, by the end of the 18th century, the lands of the king *Mwant Yaav* were already indicated on the top right-hand corner of the map of Angola elaborated by the cartographer Pinheiro Furtado (cf.

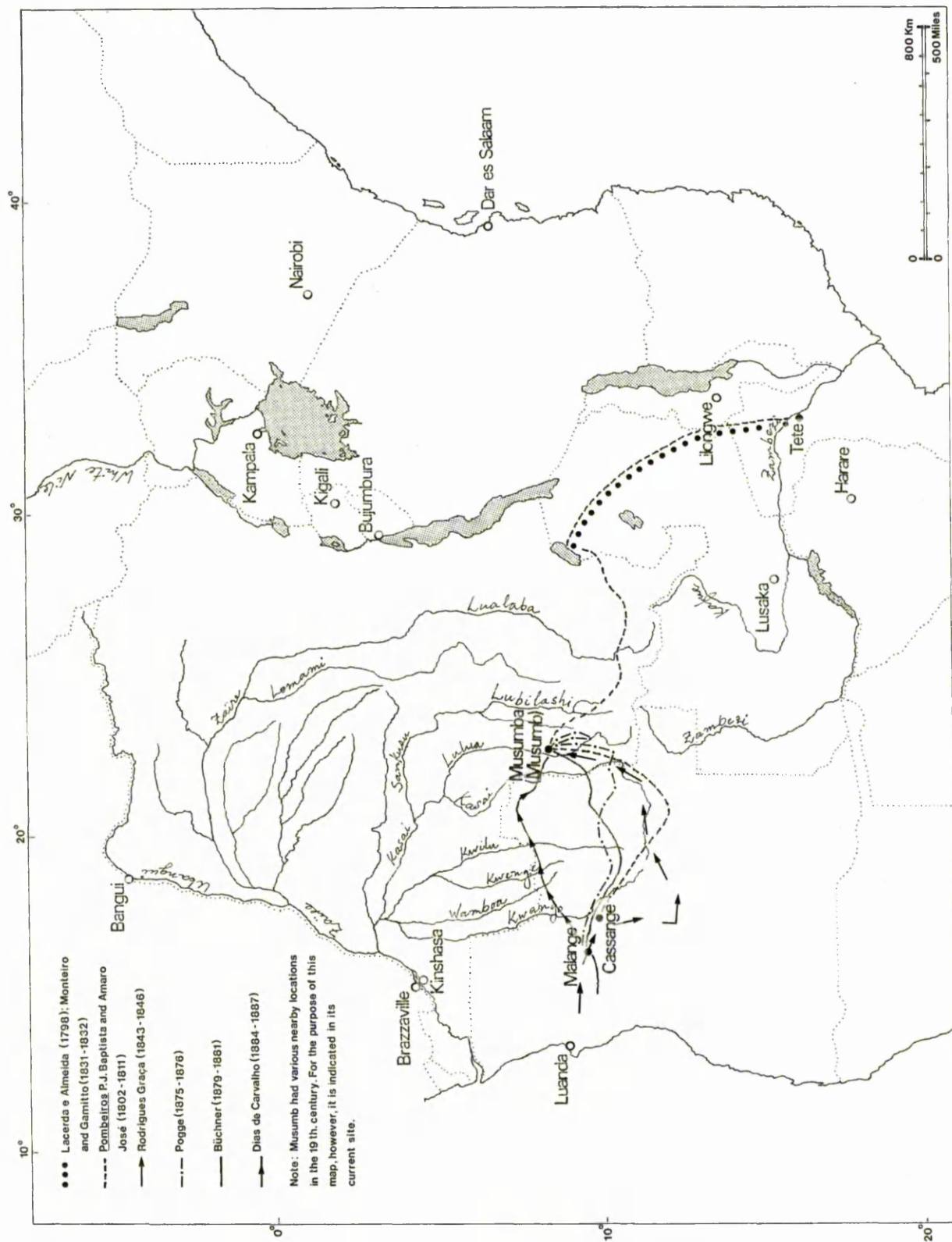
ibid.:161).

The expedition of Lacerda e Almeida that set out in 1798 was, however, the first Portuguese scientific mission to take place (cf. *Map 1*). In later years the continuity of travels in this part of Africa had been left, to a large extent, to the individual initiative of explorers, merchants and adventurers. But exploration of the territories between Angola and Mozambique became now essential in assessing possibilities of carving out a route for the commerce with Asia. The discoveries of Lacerda e Almeida were also expected to improve the topographic maps of Central Africa.

At the time of this expedition that left from Tete in Mozambique, all of the eastern region of Angola, Katanga and part of Zambia were domains of two large potentates: the *Mwant Yaav*'s to the west of the Lualaba River and the *Kazembe*'s to the east. Although Lacerda e Almeida never succeeded in crossing the continent, his expedition represented a considerable step forward. The exploratory travels from the eastern coast had now reached as far as Lake Mweru and, from the west, the white traders from Angola (*sertanejos*) were nearing the Lunda lands of the *Mwant Yaav*, a kingdom believed to be not only of great wealth and power but also a gateway to the interior and to the commerce in the East. To complete the transcontinental journey only the route between the two native kingdoms would then have to be undertaken.

When in 1811 the two Angolan merchants, Pedro João Baptista and Amaro José, finally completed the crossing of the African continent they had, thus, not only undertaken a major feat but accomplished a dream two centuries old by then. During this journey which took over eight years the two *pombeiros*¹ lived in the court of the Lunda king, the *Mwant Yaav* (1806). Their diary, published in 1843 (and translated into English in 1873), was then the only report on the vast region situated between the Kasai and Lake Mweru

¹ Native traders from Angola who acted as agents of white merchants.



MAP 1: JOURNEYS ACROSS CENTRAL AFRICA TO THE KINGDOMS OF THE MWANT YA'AV AND KAZEMBE

(cf. Santos, 1978:210).

The literature actually describing the vast empire of the *Mwant Yaav* only dates from the mid-19th century onwards. Gamitto's *O Muata Cazembe* (1854) is the first important report for the peoples of the *Kazembe* claim their origin from the Lunda of the *Mwant Yaav*. His diary resulted from an expedition carried out in 1831-2 to negotiate with the king *Kazembe*, taking up the contact established by Lacerda e Almeida three decades before.

In the early years of the 19th century African traders attempted to open up new itineraries to the lands of the *Mwant Yaav* and several Portuguese traders in the 1830s and 40s actually succeeded in making their way to the Lunda. In 1846 Rodrigues Graça, a merchant, arrived at the capital of the *Mwant Yaav*. His mission was to establish direct trade relations with the Lunda potentate thus breaking the monopoly of the Kasanje kingdom over the Lunda trade. Graça's travel report (1855), along with information transmitted by African and European traders from Angola who had progressively infiltrated the Lunda country, were the only descriptive data on this kingdom until the arrival of the German explorers in the last quarter of the 19th century. Indeed it was not until 1875 that the Berlin Geographical Society showed interest in a systematic exploration of this part of Africa, the year in which the explorer P. Pogge arrived at the capital of the *Mwant Yaav*'s empire from Angola. His *Im Reiche des Muata Yamvo* (1880) and M. Büchner's report of his expedition (1879-1881) are the German contributions to the last century's knowledge on this state.

At the end of the nineteenth century the most comprehensive and detailed study on the Lunda kingdom was produced. The volumous account of Dias de Carvalho on his expedition to the *Mwant Yaav*'s court in 1884-88 is an ambitious but scrupulous project

which reflects the encyclopedic mind of a 19th century scientist. This expedition was no longer concerned with the opening of new routes. It was a diplomatic mission aiming at re-establishing the old Portuguese influence at the *Mwant Yaav*'s potentate and commercial relations between the Angolan territories and the Lunda state. It was intended to direct to the Portuguese province the flow of merchandise which was being progressively diverted to the northern regions as a result of the navigation of the Kasai and Zaïre Rivers supported by Belgian and German stations. The exploration of the inland markets was also an important issue in view of the building of a railway line from the Angolan capital to Ambaca which was intended to transport merchandise resulting from the commerce in the western part of Central Africa. In addition to these "economic" reasons, Portugal was concerned with safeguarding its "historical rights" over the Lunda area from the Congo Free State's occupation of Central African territory and from British penetration northward from South Africa. Major Dias de Carvalho was to pursue this cause hence, on his arrival at the *musumb*, the *Mwant Yaav*'s court, he signed with the paramount chief a protectorate treaty recognizing Portuguese sovereignty over Lunda.

Asked to produce a plan of the expedition, Dias de Carvalho set himself a major task: "...what advantages could the borderland central region offer us? And how could this region be thoroughly known without a knowledge of the products of its soil, its climates, the aptitudes of its peoples, their habits, their history, their political existence and above all their language? These thoughts dominated me..." (1890:I,5; my translation). However ambitious, this plan was to be accomplished. The range of subjects covered in the eleven volume account of the expedition does not compromise in any way the detail and precision of his writings. The report (1890-4) includes four volumes of description of the journey, a grammar of the Lunda language, two volumes on vocabulary, one on meteorology and climatology, an ethnographic album, a volume on climate, flora and

agricultural products (this written by the second in command, Sisenando Marques) and, that which is of most interest to us, a volume on the ethnography and history of the Lunda peoples.

The latter, in the characteristic descriptive and ethnocentric style of the time, is a most precious ethnographic document. For one concerned with issues on kingship, in particular, a very considerable amount of stimulating data are gathered in this volume: a lengthy account of the oral tradition of origin of the Lunda state, a description of the *Mwant Yaav*'s court (*musumb*) detailing a great number of royal dignitaries, their titles and attributions, information on chiefly insignia as well as a description, if very incomplete, of the king's investiture rite. A reconstruction of the chronology and succession of the *Ant Yaav* (sing.: *Mwant Yaav*) is also attempted. Sure enough, the use in his work of a moralizing speech within the framework of a "civilizing" action in Africa often distorts information while other material, collected during his relatively short stays in the expedition stations, may contain some misleading data. Nonetheless, the detail and richness of the descriptions are not shadowed by the limitations of his work.

Dias de Carvalho's writings refer, of course, to a reality long left behind. The *Mwant Yaav* was then a true ruling sovereign and the empire, if no longer in its apogee, was still a firmly established network of domains linked to the court by the payment of tribute and acknowledgment of the *Mwant Yaav*'s effective political power. Since the late 19th century significant changes inevitably occurred in the Lunda political situation and thus the way in which the villages and minor chiefs relate to the king and his court.

The domain of the *Mwant Yaav* constituted a vast empire spreading as far as the Kwango River in the west (Kasongo-Lunda) and the Luapula in the east (cf. *Map 2*). This expansion of the Lunda empire was to affect the history of a major area in Central Africa until 1850. To maintain the new territories under its control political administrators (*ayilol*)

were sent to the outlying areas, their main role being that of tax collectors. The local rulers (*anshir-a-ngand*) were in this way assimilated into a tributary network. Although submitted to an alien rule, however, their symbolic authority over the land was preserved and recognized by the Lunda intruders performing functions of *cilol*. The remarkable success of the dispersion of the Lunda political structure is often attributed to this dichotomy between local land trustees and "political chiefs" (cf. Bustin, 1975:4).

Beyond its economic importance, the tribute was a symbol of political dependency and thus of crucial relevance in the organization of the Lunda state. It included copper, salt, slaves and later, ivory. In return, the *Mwant Yaav* reciprocated by sending his subject chiefs "gifts" of imported goods such as cloth, guns and gunpowder and other manufactured items. Political delegates, the *aanyiyikej*, made sure that tribute would reach the capital coming from the chiefs (*ayilol*, sing.: *cilol*) residing far away from the *musumb* who would also retain a share of the amount collected. The sovereign would send a military force, led by the *atukwaat* (sing.: *kakwaat*), to arrest a chief who refrained from paying tribute, relied upon by the royal village for subsistence.

Having reached its territorial apogee by the mid-19th century, the Lunda empire was, however, already in decline by the time of Dias de Carvalho's travel. The might of the *Mwant Yaav*, supported by profits of the slave trade, had been greatly affected once Portugal agreed under international pressure to outlaw this trade and later when slavery was abolished altogether (It should be recalled that Angola's economy depended almost entirely on slave dealing at the turn of the 19th century). Also, in the 1840s the Cokwe had begun their expansion to the north, the rise of the trade in ivory and wax having involved them in long-distance trade. As they followed the retreat of the elephant herds to the north, they infiltrated Lunda homeland in the 1870s progressively, although they did not submit to the power of the *Mwant Yaav*. In 1884 when the Portuguese expedition

reached the *musumb* the Lunda had already been engaged in numerous battles and hardship and discontent prevailed.

The pages of Dias de Carvalho's report are thus a testimony to an empire in decline and a country undergoing a major Cokwe invasion. In 1885 the capital was plundered and around 6,000 Lunda taken captive as slaves (cf. Bustin, 1975:17). Two years later, in January 1987, the Cokwe invaded the *musumb* again and a fire devoured the capital which was located at that time near the Nkalaany River. Dias de Carvalho describes the panic of thousands of people who in a massive uproar fled to the east; among them the members of the royal court abandoned the capital. Lunda country fell under Cokwe rule for a full decade and it was not until 1898 that the Lunda reconquered their territory and drove the Cokwe into retreat.

The empire that survived into the 20th century and into the colonial era no longer possessed - despite Lunda *reconquista* - the strength and power it had once known. Some eastern and western provinces were lost. In addition, new boundaries had been defined by the European powers and in 1891 Lunda country was partitioned. Portugal obtained the area west of the Kasai River while the Congo Free State gained control over the Lunda heartland. The southern part, on the other hand, was now largely mixed with the Cokwe population which was in the majority in most areas. The tributary system had also crumbled here and there. In fact, the Lunda were only to emerge from such a weakened position under the Belgian administration with the government policy introduced in 1915 which formally authorized traditional rulers to claim customary tribute (cf. *ibid.*:55).

II

The so-called "Lunda" peoples who once belonged to a common political rule under the authority of the sovereign holding the title of *Mwant Yaav* include the "Lunda

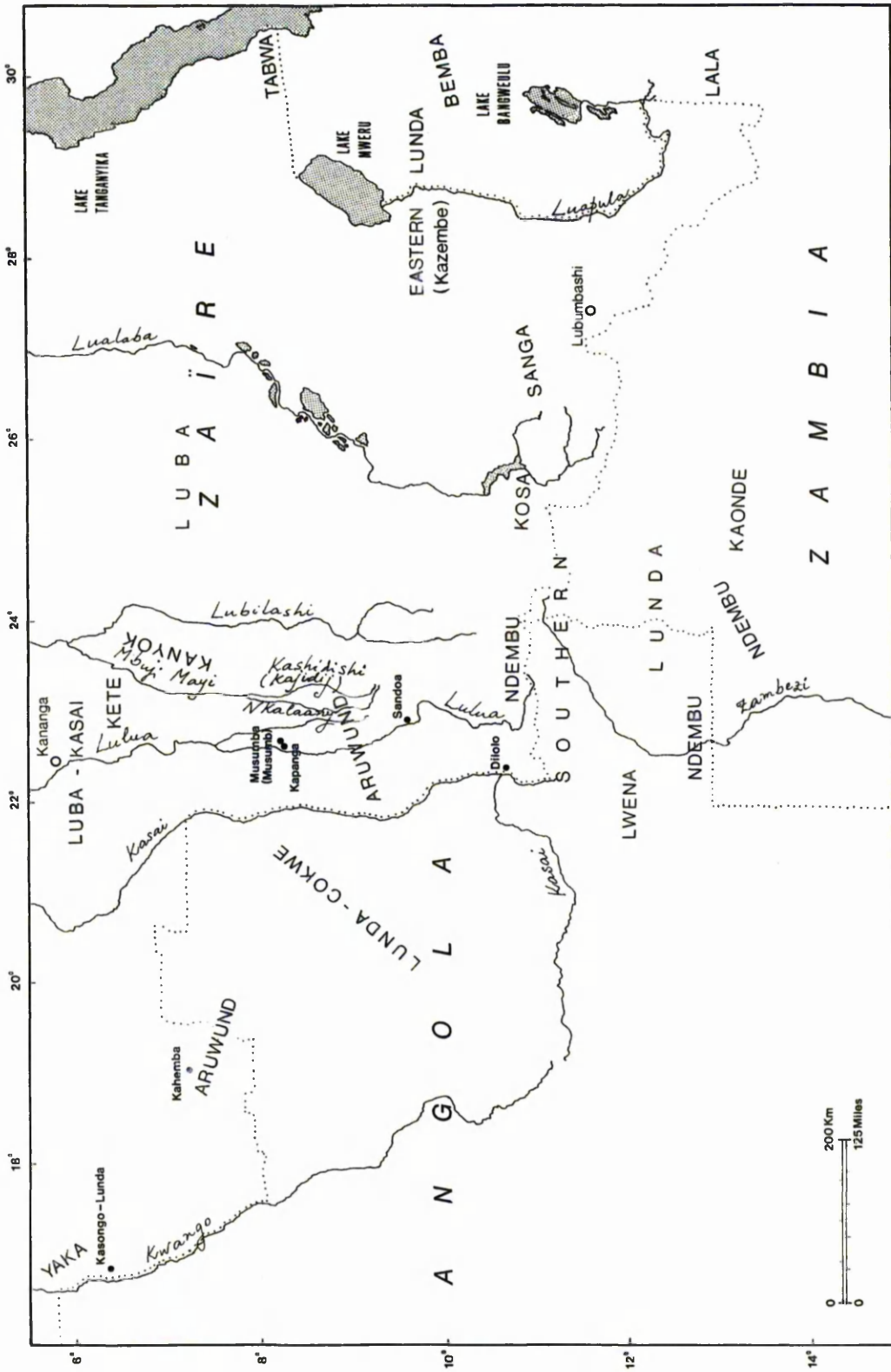
of the *Mwant Yaav*", who call themselves "Aruwund" and constitute the group from which the Lunda state originated, the Luapula peoples of the *Kazembe* or "Eastern Lunda", the Ndembu or "Southern Lunda", the Yaka, the Lua of the Kwango and other small peripheral groups (cf. *Map 3*).

The use of the term "Lunda" is in itself a problematic issue (cf. Bustin, 1975:VIII-XII). Following Bustin's and Hoover's suggestion (1978b:72) I shall be employing it throughout the text as a historical term designating an extinct system and a more extensive grouping of peoples whose chiefs were, at one time or another, linked to the *Mwant Yaav* and his court by the payment of tribute. Today, however, these groups are recognized as totally independent polities from the *Mwant Yaav*'s jurisdiction although their oral traditions still link them to the central peoples, the Aruwund (cf. *infra*:39-40).

Inhabiting the southern Zaïrian savanna on the northern slope of the Kasai plateau, the Aruwund², also called throughout the literature "Lunda of the *Mwant Yaav*" or "Northern Lunda", are thus the original peoples ruled by the *Mwant Yaav* who are recognized by other Lunda as the "nuclear group" to which they trace their origin. They occupy mainly Kapanga and Sandoa administrative zones in south Zaïre's Shaba region (Lualaba subregion) and a narrow band extends across north-eastern Angola into the Bandundu region of Zaïre (zone of Kahemba, cf. *Maps 2 and 3*). In O. Boone's ethnic map (1961:160-1), the Ruwund³ country is situated *grosso modo* between the 8th and 10th south parallels, limited to the west by the Kasai River and to the east by the Kamutambaie (NE) and Lubilash (SE) Rivers. They speak Uruwund (cf. *supra*:12), although the Aruwund of Kahemba zone (in Bandundu region, Upper Kwango) speak a

² Different spellings for this term can be found in the literature such as "Baluunda" and "Aluunda".

³ The radical "-ruwund" is here used as the adjective relating to "Aruwund".



MAP 3: THE ARUWUND AND NEIGHBOURING PEOPLES

different dialect from that of the Ruwund heartland.

The main vegetation type in Ruwund country at Kapanga and Sandoa zones is a savanna with forest galleries along the rivers, characteristic of these latitudes and corresponding to a tropical climate of two seasons. During the dry season (mid April/May till October) villagers gather around small fires in the early morning and the women, wearing an extra cloth around their shoulders, often comment on the coolness of the air to which the Aruwund are obviously very sensitive. The dust often gathers in whirlwinds crossing the villages and sweeping everything as they pass. The wet season starts with "dry storms" in the middle of September and is marked by the characteristic tropical rains. Open fires which are an essential part of social gathering in the evenings all year round are now indispensable as protection from the onslaught of mosquitoes. Tall and fresh green elephant grass rapidly takes over land leaving no trace of the yellowish and charred stems left behind by the numerous bush fires of the dry season.

The Aruwund are agriculturalists who adjust much of their everyday activities to the requisites of cultivation of their main cash crop(s) which may vary from peanuts (in the Nkalaany area) to rice, maïs, soya or beans⁴. Manioc, the staple food, is cultivated widely; the Ruwund diet consists of a dough made of manioc flour and water which is prepared as a steaming ball (*ruku*) and served with one, or sometimes two, side dishes. These may consist of pounded manioc leaves or other vegetable and/or foods gathered seasonally by women such as different kinds of termites, grasshoppers, butterfly larvae or mushrooms. Less often, when a man is successful in hunting or fishing (women also have a kind of collective fishing), river fish or a small piece of meat, which is most commonly antelope or wild boar in the rural villages distant from markets, can also enrich the diet.

⁴ I am grateful to Dieter Imhof for having supplied me with a list of the cash crops produced in Kapanga zone.

No food is considered "a meal" unless it includes *ruku*, the manioc dough which is the basis of one's diet. The Ruwund language distinguishes between *kuda*, "to eat" (that is, to eat with *ruku*) and *kusaakul* meaning "to eat lightly" which refers to the consumption of any foods not served with *ruku*, even if in considerable quantity.

A 19th century source interpreted (or misinterpreted) such diet as a sign of decadence of the Lunda peoples undergoing the war with the Cokwe. Dias de Carvalho writes: "[The Lunda] vegetate, they do not live, contenting themselves in scraping off the trees searching for bugs and looking in the soil for roots and mice" (1890:254; my translation). The author, with his preconceived ideas on what a diet should consist of, believes this menu to express a time of scarcity for the Aruwund. In fact, beetle larvae (*ampur*) which shelter in early stages in the axils of the palm tree *mudid* (*Raphia vinifera*, cf. Marques, 1889:293 and de Boeck, 1991:478) are a most relished item in the Ruwund diet and elephant shrews (*ampuku*) who are underground dwellers (probably what Dias de Carvalho refers to as "mice") are a common food in the dry season when they are dug up after the bush fires!

Speakers of the Ruwund language in the Shaba region alone appear to amount to at least 150,000 (around 130,000 were estimated in 1948-49, cf. O. Boone, 1961:164) spreading out mainly in the Kapanga zone and in the zone of Sandoa where they mix with the Cokwe. The 1986 census⁵ for the Kapanga zone, where my research took place, indicated a total of 81,525 inhabitants, all Aruwund, distributed over an area of 24,476 sq. km, 21,270 being concentrated in Musumb (Musumba), the royal village and capital of the Ruwund kingdom⁶.

⁵ According to the annual report in the archives of Kapanga zone, Kapanga.

⁶ On my return to the field in 1991 the total population for Kapanga zone was 128,633 and 32,744 inhabitants were reported for Musumb.

Musumb is a town settled in the heart of Kapanga zone, just 9km from the government administrative post of the zone, Kapanga, a village which in 1986 had merely 600 inhabitants⁷. At one time it was not infrequent for a newly invested *Mwant Yaav* to have his own royal village (*musumb*) built. The capital of the kingdom had thus known a number of locations (mainly at the Nkalaany area) until it was established permanently near Kapanga after the Belgians had set up their government post there⁸.

The effective power of the *Mwant Yaav*, once encompassing a wider Lunda world, is nowadays practically confined to this Ruwund population of Kapanga and Sandoa zones in southern Zaïre, although a number of the highest titleholders are still said hold territory in lands situated in eastern Angola and northwestern Zambia supervised by their own subordinate chiefs. These still recognize the supremacy of the Ruwund king and may eventually come to Musumb to attend a royal meeting (*citentam*).

Despite the changes which obviously occurred since the times of the Lunda empire, the Ruwund village chiefs (*ayilol*) are still liable for payment of tribute (*mulambu*) to the Ruwund king. The sovereign will opportunely convoke the *ayilol* to the court for a public meeting (*citentam*) and for the presentation of tribute/offering (in either money or produce) collected at their villages. However, while at one time the whole organization of the state relied on the collection of tribute which provided the regional and the *Mwant Yaav*'s courts with the profits of commerce and the slave trade, today tribute constitutes merely a supplement to the budget attributed by the official government to the *Mwant*

⁷ This figure was collected in the archives of the Lualaba Hydraulic Project, Sandoa. In the 1991 census for the Kapanga zone the population of Kapanga village had mounted up to 2,523.

⁸ Since today's royal court has become a permanent site and "Musumb" the actual name of a locality, I distinguish the upper case form, throughout the text, from the lower case use of the word *musumb*, meaning a royal village or any king's temporary encampment. Ruwund informants attribute a Luba origin to this term which in kiluba means "hunting camp". The sense of "royal village" or "capital" would have originated in the fact that Ruwund oral traditions associate the foundation of kingship to the hero-hunter Cibind Yirung (allegedly a Luba).

Yaav as chief of an administrative division called a "collectivité". This intersection between traditional and official powers should be clarified at this point.

At Musumb the power of the *Mwant Yaav*, as a traditional king, is obviously restricted by that of the "commissaire de zone", the government authority of Kapanga zone. This is aggravated by the geographical proximity of both powers since Musumb, the royal village, is located, as mentioned, a mere 9 km from Kapanga, the government post. An administrative "zone" often encompasses various "collectivities" (*collectivités*), each under the jurisdiction of a local village chief (*cilol*) who has his subordinate *ayilol* in the settlements belonging to his *collectivité*. Kapanga zone, however, constitutes one single collectivity, the *Mwant Yaav* being both the traditional sovereign and the "chef de collectivité". This implies an extra superposition of powers in relation to the *commissaire de zone*. During my stay in the field there were many latent conflicts and complaints from both sides. To complicate matters further a third power is present at the king's court. Since the Ruwund rebellion in 1977, known as the "war of 80 days", a military outpost (*l'État Major*) and its troops are installed in Musumb and compete in the exercise of power. As a consequence of this the Aruwund may suffer the demands of three different powers but also have as many to resort to in order to escape them or to solve their conflicts.

The presence of the official authorities does not, however, rule out the traditional power of the *Mwant Yaav*. If at the court there is an unsurmountable clash of powers, in the outlying villages it is still the authority of the Ruwund king and his court dignitaries who are the main reference. Conflicts unresolved at the village level, are brought by their chiefs (*ayilol*) or the interested parties before the king or, in his absence, of the so-called "college du *Mwant Yaav*", a committee of major dignitaries (*ayilol*) which is to judge affairs and supply, on the king's return, a report and evaluation of events occurring in his

absence. Problems concerning the relative ranking among chiefs or other matters of traditional organization fall within the scope of the "college" or are settled by the king himself. Conflicts of other nature, however, may also be arbitrated by a governmental court (the court of the *collectivité*).

To the northeast of Musumb, between the rivers Nkalaany (upper Mbuji Mayi) and Kajidij (Kashidishi) in Kapanga zone, lie the "sacred lands" of the Nkalaany. These are considered to be the Ruwund original homeland as, according to oral traditions, they were the setting of the mythical episodes leading to the foundation of the state (cf. *infra*:ch.I). This interriverine area, which is also the site where the royal enthronement ritual takes place, is inhabited by the great *atubung* who invest the *Mwant Yaav* granting him the authority of the local ancestors whom they represent.

III

My fieldwork (carried out from February 1987 to August 1988 and for a shorter two month period in 1992) began with an initial four months in Musumb and then continued in one of the villages at the Nkalaany named Ciland, although research was extended to the whole area where the great *atubung* reside. Ciland, situated about 60-70 km east of Musumb, the royal capital, had 420 inhabitants in 1988. It is the largest village in the Nkalaany area although a fairly medium sized settlement in the whole of Kapanga where 60% of the villages have up to 150 inhabitants with a few larger settlements comprising between one and two thousand people⁹.

The choice of a fieldwork site or of an area of studies is more frequently motivated by personal and often obscure preferences rather than the outcome of a careful evaluation upon the needs and gaps of anthropological theory. Nevertheless, a number of

⁹ According to data collected in 1986 by the survey team of the Lualaba Hydraulic Project.

reasons can invariably be found, *a posteriori*, to account for one's choice. As for the Aruwund, the absence of any major or systematic anthropological study spoke for itself¹⁰. Although extensive work has been carried out on other Lunda groups - in the writings of Victor Turner for the Lunda-Ndembu (e.g. 1953, 1967, 1968, 1969), of C.M.N. White for the Lunda-Balovale (e.g. 1960, 1961) and of Ian Cunnison for the Luapula peoples of the *Kazembe* (1951, 1959, among other works) -, in the case of the Aruwund (Lunda of the *Mwant Yaav*) we are faced with a substantial lack of ethnographic data with the Ruwund material consequently devoid of consistent and reliable analysis. Yet a knowledge of the Aruwund appears undeniably crucial as they constituted one of the largest kingdoms of Central Africa and represent the nuclear group from which the other Lunda peoples broke away.

Since Crine-Mavar's results of his extended stay amongst the Aruwund were mainly published in two articles (1973, 1974) of a rather broad nature which aim to present a historical account for the whole of Shaba region, Jeffrey Hoover's doctoral thesis (1978b) is the only detailed and extensive study at our disposal which results from recent fieldwork among the Aruwund. This latter work demonstrates a deep understanding of the area and presents an important amount of very useful ethnographic data although the material is mainly directed (if legitimately) to a reconstruction of Ruwund early history. Nonetheless, Hoover's thesis is filled with valuable linguistic data on Ruwund political titles (1978b:Appendix 2) and contains a very considerable amount of information on the organization of the *Mwant Yaav*'s court. An account of the kinship terminology system

¹⁰ Recently a comprehensive study, dealing mainly with fertility, healing and ritual therapy, was carried out in Bandundu among the Aruwund of Kahemba (Aluund), a "subgroup" of the Aruwund of the Shaba region (de Boeck, 1991). By the time I had access to this Ph.D. dissertation, however, my text was nearly concluded (although only much later was it submitted) and hence the use I make of the material it contains is very sporadic and only marginal. A comparative approach of the ethnography of both groups would certainly enrich the analysis presented in this thesis.

and some considerations on Ruwund political organization are also of great importance in the study of kingship which is my concern in this thesis.

One other work is Stephan Lucas' comparative study of the Luba and Aruwund socio-political structures (1968). His fieldwork, however, was carried out among the Luba and his discussion on Ruwund material relies totally on data scattered throughout a few articles which were collected at Musumb by missionaries and former Belgian administrators.

About these articles, very little needs to be said. All of them relate versions of the Ruwund oral tradition on the founding of the state (to which we shall return later, *infra:ch.I*) and, in their literalistic interpretation, present them as recounting real past events of Ruwund history. Van den Byvang's (1937) is to a great extent based on Dias de Carvalho's text and Struyf's (1948) relates to the peripheral Ruwund area of Kahemba in Bandundu region. Briefly, all attempt - and Duysters' (1958) in particular - to reconstruct a chronology of the succession of the *Ant Yaav* from the early hypothetical times of the foundation of the state. Biebuyck's text (1957) additionally introduces us to the Ruwund organization at the king's court as well as supplying a detailed description of the positioning of the royal high dignitaries while attending the great public audience (*citentam*) at Musumb.

As we can see, the writings on the Aruwund at our disposal are almost exclusively based on data collected at the royal village alone. Even Hoover's extensive work results from a prolonged stay (nearing three years) as a teacher in Musumb. In fact, it is astonishing how little information actually exists on Ruwund villages other than the *Mwant Yaav*'s court. This has obviously restricted authors to the discussion of issues concerning the court, its dignitaries and the legitimacy of historical reconstruction from oral traditions that relate the origin of the state.

Although I was mainly concerned with issues on kingship ideology, my choice of fieldwork in an outlying village rather than at the king's court was not so much a reaction to the overemphasis of previous sources on Musumb and its court dignitaries or merely a desire to expand our view of the Aruwund. Rather, this choice tied in with what appeared to me one of the major theoretical limitations of studies on royal ritual and kingship symbolism.

Indeed, the present literature on the Aruwund, based on data solely collected at Musumb, may only provide a partial and probably distorted view of the Ruwund royal symbolism. Although the organization of the king's court and the ritualized behaviour which surrounds the sovereign and his dignitaries allow us some insight into the Ruwund ideology of sovereignty (cf. Palmeirim, 1989), a full understanding of royal symbolism and kingship ideology can only be attained by resorting to a wider *structure of rituals*, namely those which affect other high officials and lesser mortals in Ruwund society. As discussed in the final chapter, this has in fact been a major setback in the writings on kingship symbolism where royal ritual is often discussed with total disregard of *non-royal* ceremonies. Indeed one can only affirm what is *specific* to the ritual practices surrounding the monarch should one be able to confront these with a wide range of rites which, in Ruwund society, affect the life of commoners. The observation of these rites thus becomes as essential to the understanding of royal symbolism as the actual royal rituals themselves. Moreover, an accurate perception of the king's court might be attained as much by observing it from within as from the outside, from the viewpoint of the peripheral courts which obviously maintain with the royal village a whole set of interrelations whose nature we shall examine.

CHAPTER I

IN PRAISE OF THE MYTH

The origin of kingship I

The myth of foundation of Ruwund kingship is both a tale of the creation of humanity and that of the passage from a primitive mode of life to one considered superior. It recounts the beginnings of the Aruwund, of kingship and, as I shall argue (*infra*: ch.II), conceives the renewal of society. Its placement at the opening of this thesis is a recognition of its unique place within the Ruwund framework of thought, for the elements which define the ideology of sovereignty, the hierarchy and the political structure only seem to gain significance within the symbolic setting layed out by this main oral narrative. Indeed the whole concept of Ruwund kingship can, in a manner of speaking, be viewed as a mere elaboration on this main myth.

Myth of Origin of the Aruwund and the Foundation of Kingship¹

The Creation

Mbar and his wife Musang, the first ancestors of the Aruwund, lived in a cave (*mandam*)². In this underground abode they cultivated using the axe and hoe and mastered hunting and fishing techniques. They already possessed the *rukan*

¹ With the exception of a few references to *Ngand Yetu* which are indicated, this narrative was collected during my fieldwork at Nkalaany in the presence of the *kabung Ngwaad*.

² Related to the verb *kwandam*, "to enter". Some informants (cf. also Hoover, 1978b:636-7) locate the *mandam* at Piyaal-a-Rubemb (lit.: "At the rock of the *rubemb*", the *rubemb* being a double bell in iron considered sacred and guarded by certain *ayilol* at the original lands of the Nkalaany). Others, however, claim this to be one other location which the Aruwund inhabited after having emerged from the cave.

(sacred bracelet which is the Ruwund insignia of power), the *rubemb* (double iron bell, cf. *Photograph 1*) and the stones to make fire³ (cf. *Ngand Yetu*:9). They lived with a dog (*ibid.*) and Mbar wove mats and sieves for manioc.

From this original couple two children were born, Mwaaku and his sister Kaswaasu, who intermarried and in turn gave birth to two sons, named Kaband and Iyaal, and two daughters, Kwon and Kabang. Kaband, the eldest, was a feeble child and thus power was transmitted from Mwaaku to his son Iyaal. Both the brothers took one of their sisters for a spouse and from these two incestuous couples a vast progeny originated.

The Aruwund soon became numerous and the cave too small a space so the population eventually left the darkness of the *mandam* and came out into the sunlight. Mwaaku and his kin are said to have been the first to inhabit the surface of the earth while Mbar and Musang, the original ancestors, were buried in the cave (*ibid.*). Once outside the Aruwund built a village which was named "Kasal Katok"⁴.

At Kasal Katok the people lived contentedly. Matit had inherited the power insignia from his father Iyaal and, in his turn, entrusted it to his son, Nkond (cf. *Figure 1*).

Mbar and Musang convey, thus, the idea of a Creator, source of all life, Mbar being often surnamed Cinawej, one of the terms used today for the Christian God. The etymology of their names is self explanatory of their power of creation: "Mbar" is derived from the verb *kubarik*, "to divide itself, to split by itself, to burst apart with a noise" and "Musang" from *kusangul*, "to give life, to resuscitate". As the Aruwund explain, *Mbar ni Musang abarika pansh*, that is, "Mbar and Musang 'exploded' from the ground", *Mbar wabaril kal aan; Musang, ndiy wasangula*, "Mbar divided the children; Musang, she gave life"⁵. The cave from which the Aruwund emerged, designated *mandam ma kafangadim*⁶,

³ The Aruwund designate this type of fire-making as *kasu ka Ruwej* ("the fire of Ruwej") to indicate its ancestral origin.

⁴ "Kasal katok" which means "small white feather" also signifies, according to some informants (cf. also Hoover, 1978b:639), "it is/it becomes light" (from *kusal*, "to do" and *-tok*, "light, white").

⁵ Hoover translates Musang as "she who produced the first seeds" noting that the original staple crop of the Aruwund was millet (*masang*) (1978b:633). My informants, however, traced the etymology of the name to the verb *kusangul* (as mentioned above).

⁶ Word composed from *kufa*, "to die", and *cangadim*, "girl (before bearing children)" for, according to the oral tradition, the girls who went to get water from the river flowing inside the cave (also named Kafangadim) would often die.



Photograph 1: The royal mbemb (sing.: rubemb).

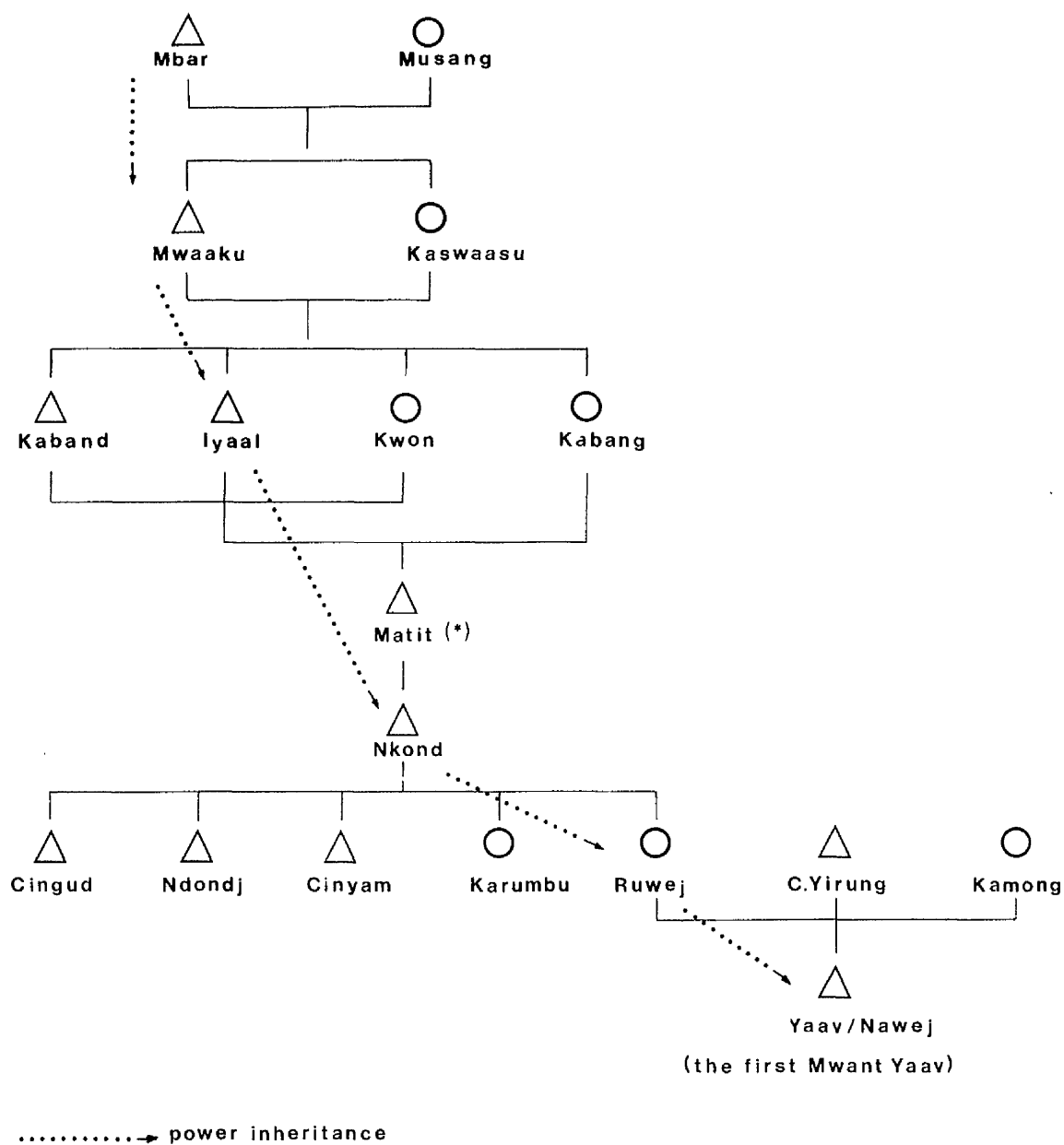


Figure 1: *The Heroes of the Ruwund Foundation Myth*
(Version collected during fieldwork)

(*) Informants may disagree at this point of the genealogy. Matit may also be said to be a *mwanamaaku* (brother/cousin) of Iyaal (cf. also *Ngand Yetu*:9).

is said to be located to the east of the river Kajidij (not far from the village of Mwant Cinan) and is one of the Ruwund sacred sites.

This myth that attributes the birth of humanity to an original subterranean locus ties in with the tradition of origin of Ruwund kingship. The narrative which I collected in the field, at Nkalaany, recounts:

The Origin of Kingship

Nkond-a-Matit⁷, the ruling chief at Kasal Katok, had five children: three sons⁸, Cingud, Ndondj and Cinyam and two daughters, Karumbu and Ruwej.

One day, on returning to the village after a hunting trip, the sons of Nkond found their father weaving a mat. As they passed him, tired and thirsty, they saw a basin with the milky coloured water used for dipping the fibres which they mistook for palm wine (*maruvu*). They asked Nkond for the wine but the chief replied: "It is water, not *maruvu*". Thinking they were being deceived, the sons angrily beat their father. It is his daughter Ruwej who came to his aid. When the chief recovered he proclaimed a curse against his sons, declaring that on his death the *rukan*, the chiefly bracelet, should not be entrusted to them but to his youngest daughter, Ruwej⁹.

Upon her father's death, Ruwej, therefore, became chief at Kasal Katok ruling with the assistance of her closest relatives (*anamaaku*, "siblings/cousins"¹⁰). They lived peacefully. One day, however, having gone to collect *maruvu* (palm wine) in the river forest, a brother/cousin (*mwanamaaku*, pl.: *anamaaku*) of Ruwej, the chief entitled *Ngwaad-a-Cying*, discovered that someone had already drunk his wine leaving in its place a piece of meat. The next day the episode repeated itself. The *Ngwaad* returned to the village and told the princess Ruwej of the intriguing event. Ruwej advised him to go back and hide in order to catch the stranger. Indeed, the next morning, the *Ngwaad* and his fellow chief, the *Mwiin Katet*, saw foreigners on the other river bank carving up two antelopes. On

⁷ Lit.: "Nkond of Matit", meaning "Nkond, son of Matit".

⁸ Kinship terms are given throughout the text in the Ruwund language (Uruwund) as most of them are classificatory terms encompassing more than one biological relationship. In cases where the Aruwund themselves specified the blood tie to which they were referring (and only in those cases) I indicated the biological kinship relation in particular, omitting its form in Uruwund. Above, the term used for "son" and "daughter" is *mwaan* (pl.: *aan*) which also includes other kinship ties (for instance that of great-grandchild, of niece and nephew for a female ego or, for a male ego, of niece or nephew when children of ego's male *anamaaku*). A full definition of Ruwund kinship terms can be found in chapter III.

⁹ For a variant of this episode cf. *infra*:75-6.

¹⁰ For a full description of this kinship term cf. chapter II.

seeing them, one of the strangers introduced himself: "I am Cibind Yirung"¹¹. "Where did you come from?", the *Ngwaad* enquires. "I am a Luba from Kasong-a-Nyimbu", answered the stranger. Having explained that he was responsible for the missing wine, Cibind Yirung returned to his *musumb*, the hunting encampment named Kabu-a-Kapend.

Informed of the presence of the outsider in her lands, Ruwej agreed that he and his followers should be welcomed at her village. The Luba hunters were thus brought to Kasal Katok. When they arrive the *Ngwaad* called the *mwanaat* Makal¹², son of Ruwej's eldest sister, Karumbu, to communicate to the princess the arrival of Cibind Yirung at her village. Makal was then asked to bring the foreigner to Ruwej and was subsequently given the "praise-name" (*nkumbu*) of "Mwamba Yirung", "he who announced Yirung"¹³.

The princess summoned all her *anamaaku* to receive the foreigner and to drink palm wine together. Cibind Yirung, however, refused to drink uncovered in public. As the night fell Ruwej invited the hunter into her house. Yirung was very handsome with his hair styled in buns (*mutu wa mafufu*) and the princess, infatuated with the Luba hunter, soon decided to marry him. Her relatives were not happy with this but it was Ruwej's decision and therefore no one dared to query it.

The time passed and the outsider appeared to have been accepted by the population who lived contentedly. One day, however, an event was to disturb the order. Ruwej was in her menstrual period and, as always, had to retire to "the far away house" (*cikumbu ca kulemp*). The princess always took out her chiefly bracelet (*rukan*) before going into confinement but, on this occasion, she put it on the arm of Cibind Yirung, thus entrusting him with the Ruwund power. Shortly afterwards, her brothers and cousins (*anamaaku*) were invited to share a meal in Ruwej's *malal* (the private room where a chief retires to eat and where a number of rules have to be observed)¹⁴. As they were going to perform the ritual salutation, however, Ruwej demanded that homage be paid to Cibind Yirung instead. Her relatives refused angrily. Why should they pay respect to a foreigner? And, not submitting to power in the hands of an alien, they decide to leave Ruwej and her lands. In this way the dispersion of the Aruwund began, Kasal Katok being thereafter referred to by the name of "Kaj-a-Rumwang" (from the verb *kumwang*, "to disperse").

From this migratory movement a few states were originated. Cingud, the eldest of Ruwej's brothers (*anamaaku*), went westwards to Angola and settled by the Kwango river where he became chief of the Imbangala (kingdom of the *Kasanje*). Cinyam, in turn, travelled south and was the founder of the Lwena in

¹¹ *Cibind* means "hunter" and Yirung corresponds to the Luba name "Ilunga".

¹² Who later receives the title of *Ncakal Makal*. *Mwanaat* means "first-born child".

¹³ From the verb *kwamb*, "to say, to announce".

¹⁴ Those who eat at a *malal* have to remain silent, an action designated as *kulam*(v.) *umaam*, and at the end of the meal should greet the chief by snapping their fingers or clapping hands (v.: *kwiikal*).

the upper Zambezi river. Finally, Ndondj founded the Songo state¹⁵. Karumbu is recalled to have followed her brothers although she later returned to the village of Ruwej.

Ruwej stayed at Kasal Katok with Cibind Yirung and her other *anamaaku* (siblings/cousins), the chiefs who were later to be designated *atubung*. One day, the Luba hunter decided to go to a blacksmith to have some arrows forged. He went to Kasopu Ruwaaz who lived at Ibwaaz, the location of the chief *Mukaciland*. At the forge, while waiting for the job to be completed, Yirung felt thirsty and asked to drink some water. It was brought to him by Kamong-a-Ruwaaz ("Kamong of Ruwaaz"). On seeing the girl, the Luba expressed the desire to marry her. Both Kasopu and the chief *Mukaciland* consented to the marriage on condition that Ruwej approved. The princess, who could not bear children herself, was in agreement and glad that Cibind Yirung was to marry one of her *anamaaku*. The following day the *Mwant Kayombu* was sent to bring the girl and the marriage took place. A single child was born, Yaav, who, upon receiving the *rukan*, came to be called *Mwant* ("chief") Yaav. Founder of a royal dynasty, Yaav was to introduce the kingship title of "Mwant Yaav".

Other variants of this epic have been recorded. The most detailed account, that collected by the Methodists and published in a book entitled *Ngand Yetu* (1963:9-19), conforms in general with my narrative except for an additional episode which relates to the transmission of the power insignia to Ruwej and which I shall discuss at length later (*infra*:75-6)¹⁶. Duysters' (1958:81-6) and Biebuyck's (1957:797-804) versions also comply with the general outline of the narrative presented. The only variant which differs considerably from the others is that of Dias de Carvalho (1890:58-76)¹⁷, and for this reason it is worth summarizing here:

¹⁵ The origin of the Cokwe is also linked to this massive migration from the Ruwund lands of the Nkalaany and is most commonly attributed to some of Cinyam's followers (cf. Duysters, 1958:84) who would have settled by the Kasai and Kwango rivers, west of the Zambezi (the Cokwe homeland). However, informants do not always agree as to the states founded by each of Ruwej's brothers.

¹⁶ The diffusion of *Ngand Yetu*, being written in the Ruwund language, was such that the Aruwund in Musumb are often quite reluctant in considering versions which do not comply with the account recorded in this Methodist publication!

¹⁷ Translated into English by V. W. Turner, 1955.

The "Bungos"¹⁸, the original people, were organized in relatively independent groups with their respective chiefs, the *atubung* (tubungos)¹⁹, whose insignia was the *rukan* (lucano), a bracelet made of human sinew. Iyaal-a-Mwaaku (Iala Macu), the senior chief, was regarded by the others with special deference. From his first wife he had two sons, Cingud (Quinguri) and Iyaal (Iala) and one daughter, Ruwej (Lueji).

Iyaal-a-Mwaaku's sons became drunkards, idle and troublesome. Discontented with their continuous foolishness, the chief threatened to appoint one of his highly esteemed nephews (*iipu*)²⁰ as his legitimate successor. Affected by these rumours, Iyaal and Cingud held a grudge against their father. On one occasion, when the old man was in his private courtyard weaving a mat, his sons, in their usual state of inebriety, erroneously took the milky coloured water which Iyaal-a-Mwaaku kept by him in a basin to soak the fibres for palm wine. They accused their father of ruining the wine and depriving them of the drink. Misled in this way, the sons insulted and cruelly assaulted the chief, abandoning him prostrated on the ground.

On her arrival Ruwej listened to the tragic episode in between her father's groans. Despite his daughter's care, Iyaal-a-Mwaaku was already dying but his last wishes were witnessed by Ruwej and her senior relatives and dignitaries whom she had hurriedly sent for. According to the father's wishes, Ruwej was declared the sole successor and mistress of Bungo territory. She was entitled "Nswaan Murund" (Suana Mulunda), an office which was thereafter transmitted representing the person of Ruwej, the heiress of the lands which were to be called "Lunda" or "Runda" (Ruwund) after the friendship (*urund*) which united the numerous native chiefs.

Iyaal-a-Mwaaku assigned the *rukan*, symbol of royal power, to his daughter who was, in turn, to hand it over to the man she would choose as the father of her children. After Iyaal-a-Mwaaku's death, Ruwej, respected by her people, ruled with the help of the elders and chiefs of the various Bungo states. As time went on, however, the nobles started showing signs of concern as Ruwej did not seem determined to choose a husband able to secure succession. Their persuasion was in vain as no one in the surroundings seemed able to conquer her heart.

Meanwhile, in the Luba state, Yirung, a great hunter, decided to leave his territory upon death of his father. Followed by his companions he set out towards the south approaching the Bungo lands of the *Nswaan Murund*. Their arrival in Ruwund country was noticed by the servants of Ruwej who were bathing that evening bathing on the opposite bank of the river Kajidij (Cajidixi), a tributary of the Nkalaany (Calanhi). Catching a glimpse of such an attractive hunter and his fellows, the girls rushed out of the water to observe from a hiding place. But

¹⁸ In current orthography "atubung". In this narrative, however, the term is unusually employed as the name of the original Aruwund (all population in general) while otherwise used to refer specifically to the chiefs representing the ancestral authority. I therefore left the term used by Dias de Carvalho unmodified to designate the original peoples.

¹⁹ The orthography adopted by Dias de Carvalho is given in parentheses.

²⁰ The term *mwiiipu* (pl.: *iipu*) applies to any child of an ego's sister/female cousin, cf. *infra*:91.

Yirung, on seeing them, called out and succeeded in speaking to the boldest servant who promised to announce his arrival to their mistress.

Attracted by the described beauty of Cibind and aware of his skills as a hunter, Ruwej asked him to stay a while in order to teach her people the handling of the bow and arrow as the sling, in use among the Bungos, had proved inefficient. Yirung agreed willingly. Some time after, he decided to send back to his brother Kasong the hatchet, *cimbuuy* (chimbuia), the insignia of power which he had brought with him, thus renouncing his rightful place as heir which his father had previously conferred upon him.

Finally Ruwej announced her intension to marry Yirung. Aware of Cingud's attempts to steal the *rukan*, Ruwej, already pregnant, urged the senior chiefs, the *atubung*, to fix the day for the ceremony of investiture of Cibind Yirung to be performed. Once the *rukan*, the sacred bracelet, was placed on his arm by the eldest among the *atubung*, Yirung was granted power in the name of the people to unite all the small states into a single empire, the kingdom of his future son, and to enlarge it by conquering neighbouring peoples.

The awaited child, whom they called Nawej, was finally born. Presented to the *citentam* (tetame), the great audience, Nawej was given the title of *Mwant Yaav* (Muatianvua). In this way the first *Mwant Yaav* was born and with him the "Ruwund empire".

Ruwej had now entrusted the power of rule to Cibind and she therefore prostrated herself before her husband and persuaded her close relatives to do likewise. Her brother Cingud, however, refused to conform with such humiliating courtesies and organized a dissident faction on the pretext that Yirung was an outsider. Intrigue and internal conflicts generated within the court. Faced with the rebelliousness of her brother, Ruwej threatened to kill him. Fearing the strength of her influence among the people, Cingud, followed by the insurgents, abandons his homeland to found a new state which would become a fiery rival of the *Mwant Yaav*'s.

Ruwej had five more sons from Yirung. As he had always been considered a stranger in the land of the Bungos, on his death, Yirung was buried on the right bank of the Kajidij in the place where he had camped on the night of his arrival.

Following Vansina's tradition, the ethnohistoric interpretation of the Ruwund narrative of state origin treats its different versions on the grounds of a historical reliability. In my view this approach has proven in many ways unrewarding with analyses straightjacketed in the search for "factual truths" and - unable to benefit from archaeological evidence - at a loss with details in which variants do or do not agree (as discussed in Palmeirim, 1989). The criteria upon which "reliable data" concealed in this oral tradition have been selected and "historical reality" decanted from its mythical constituent have ranged from the incipient literalistic approaches of Vansina's first

writings (1966) to the more elaborate metaphorical interpretations of J. Miller (1976). These analyses, however, exhibit a vulnerability to counter-argumentation (cf. Hoover's discussion on Miller, 1978b:167-75) - among ethnohistorians themselves - and this has, to a great extent, to do with the inevitable degree of subjectivity involved in such an approach.

J. Hoover, attempting to reconstruct Ruwund early history (1978b) and (consequently) driven by a concern with the worthiness of oral traditions as factual sources, discusses at length the contradictions concealed in the various versions of the tradition relating the origin of Ruwund kingship. Indeed, at the very outset the variants appear to be indecisive even as to Nkond's ancestral genealogy. In the narrative which I myself present this chief is the grandson of Iyaal-a-Mwaaku and son of Matit but in *Ngand Yetu* he is reported as being Iyaal's nephew (*mwiipu*). In Duysters' variant, Nkond is the son of Iyaal while Dias de Carvalho's informants identify Iyaal as the father of Ruwej. The versions also disagree as to the number of Nkond's children (the siblings of Ruwej) and even complete episodes appear discordant. For example, while in Duysters' version Ruwej is sterile and it is Kamong who bears the first *Mwant Yaav*, in Dias de Carvalho's, Ruwej is the biological mother of Cibind Yirung's child. In the Sanga tradition reported by Roland, the Ruwund princess had had children by an earlier consort (1963:23) but, according to Mastak, she was childless with Cibind Yirung (cf. Hoover, 1978a:79,n.63).

Faced with inconsistencies of this sort, Hoover discards Dias de Carvalho's narrative on the conjecture that his version might have been collected in non-Ruwund areas and appoints Duysters' as the valid and reliable source for historical reconstruction (*ibid.*:231-3,n.52). Contrary to this approach, however, I feel that the search for the "true statement" among the contradictory propositions of the different versions can throw one

completely off track as in the Ruwund framework of thought they appear to coexist with the same validity and are insistently reiterated to the researcher's utter dismay.

To arrive at an understanding of these seemingly inconsistent statements I propose to analyse the Ruwund tradition of foundation of the state as a "myth" within a more complex system in which "minor" oral traditions (as I shall name them henceforward) relate to the "major" narrative by elaborating on some of its passages. As I hope to demonstrate, the main myth cannot be isolated from its minor offshoots which are in themselves tools enabling us to control, beyond the subjectivity of the ethnohistoric approach, the accuracy of the different versions of the major tradition, thus throwing light upon many of their apparent contradictions.

Minor oral traditions

By means of the institutions of "perpetual kinship" (Cunnison, 1956) and "positional succession" (Richards, 1950) the heroes of the foundation epic are sustained through time into the present by living dignitaries whose titles are traced back to the oral traditions. These nobles identify with the mythical characters and with previous incumbents of the title through their experiences, their social, political and symbolic status and also in their kinship relation *vis-à-vis* the *Mwant Yaav* and other dignitaries (cf. *infra*:ch.III). We often listen to them speaking as if they had lived the mythical episodes themselves, maintaining "alive" the oral tradition to which their names are attached. Hence Ruwej is represented at the king's court by the woman dignitary with the title of *Nswaan Murund* (whom the Aruwund often address by the very name of Ruwej) while the *Rukonkish*, another royal noble, represents Kamong, the second wife of the Luba hunter and mother of the first *Mwant Yaav*. The sovereign himself is considered the heir of Cibind Yirung representing both the foreigner and his son Yaav, the first king. Other

characters in the myth find their corresponding nobles not at Musumb but in outlying areas: Ruwej's *anamaaku*, her siblings/cousins, are collectively named *atubung* and live in the lands between the rivers Nkalaany and Kajidij, the site where Ruwej would have lived originally and where she met the hunter, Cibind Yirung. This is considered the Ruwund homeland and the *atubung*, being the representatives of the local and primitive power of Ruwej that preceeded the arrival of Cibind Yirung, are its most zealous caretakers. One of the *atubung* is the *Ngwaad-a-Cying*, the chief who, in the myth, first makes contact with the alien hunter. The holders of the titles of *Mukaciland* and *Ncakai Makal* - the latter perpetuates Makal who announced Yirung to the princess Ruwej - are also chiefs who live in the villages by the Nkalaany River.

All these Ruwund nobles, both at the court and in outlying villages, can recount the oral tradition of their respective titles which connects them in one way or another to the central myth of foundation of Ruwund kingship. These function as "minor myths" which elaborate on sections of the "major" oral narrative and are more "personal" traditions in that they concern mainly the incumbents of *a particular* high office. Only the stories of titles which perpetuate main characters in the foundation myth appear to be of common knowledge. Hence the Ruwund tradition of state formation which we so often see reported in the appropriate literature can be enriched *ad infinitum* by these more "private" traditions which are recounted by the titleholders with the vividness which the system of positional succession confers upon these narratives.

Linked to these title oral narratives are the praise-names and praise-phrases attributed to the titleholders. The Aruwund call them collectively *nkumbu* (sing.: *nkumbu*) and they constitute symbolic formulae which may contain references to the "history" of the office and which often place the chief in some kind of genealogical setting. Contrary to praises in other Bantu contexts (Zulu, Tswana, for instance, cf. Apter, 1983), among

the Aruwund these are exclusive to high office or locations of mythical importance and are not recited in relation to a commoner. Here also there are no specialist praise-tellers as indeed there are no professional narrators of oral traditions of any kind. The praises should be carefully memorized by the incumbents of the respective title and possible future candidates to the office but can be recited by any Ruwund person. At times, dignitaries are referred to by their praise-name(s) and their attributes are often elucidated by reciting the praise-phrase(s) of the title. Places are also praised in much the same manner. For instance, the Nkalaany area, considered the Ruwund original country, is referred to as "Musong wa Antu", meaning "where people originated" (from *kusong*, "to sprout, to grow"; lit.: "the growing of people"). Both dignitaries and geographical locations may acquire more than one *nkumbu* thus allowing us to trace different events connected to that place or to the "history" of an office. Below we shall trace a few of these praising formulae and the oral traditions to which titles are associated in the elucidation of the central myth of origin of the state.

Kasal Katok, located to the east of the Kajidij River, was the home village of Ruwej and her *anamaaku* (her siblings/cousins) who became the local chiefs called *atubung*. The village name, as mentioned earlier (*supra*:35,n.4), refers to the light on the earth's surface as opposed to the darkness of the original cave. This is reinforced by the Ruwund expression *kwingandjel* (or *kwingangel*), *kwa Kasal Katok*, meaning "where the sun rises/in the east, at Kasal Katok". The term, however, is also used to mean "little white feather" (*kasal* being a diminutive form of *diisal*, "feather") which is an insignia of the *atubung*. The village was situated in the lands of the *Sakapemb* (*mu cipak ca Sakapemb* or *mu cipak ca Kamasol*), one of the great *atubung*, the site also being referred to as *kwingandjel, kwa Sakapemb* ("where the sun rises/in the east, at the place of the

Sakapemb"). It was at the lands of this *kabung* (pl.: *atubung*) that Cibind Yirung is believed to have arrived once he got to Ruwund country and it was there that he became the holder of Ruwund power (as stated in a praise-phrase for Kasal Katok²¹):

*Kasal Katok, pa musong-a-nsusu,
Kasal Katok, Piiyaal-a-Rubemb, pa pasongaay nkish caad
mwant, nkish cakukal atubung.*

"Kasal Katok, at the birth of the young gourds²²
Kasal Katok, Piiyaal-a-Rubemb²³, where the *nkish* [Cibind
Yirung] appeared²⁴ and then [became] chief, the *nkish*
[who] submitted²⁵ the *atubung*".

The newcomer - or as the praise-phrase says, "he who came to become chief and to his rule the *atubung* submitted" - was *an outsider*. The term *nkish* is defined by the Aruwund in a rather confused fashion as "one whose origins are unknown", a stranger or a spirit (*mukish*), a person out of the ordinary. The Luba prince arrives at the homeland of Ruwej with his bow and arrow, a symbol of his superiority and of his great hunting skills (the Aruwund used the sling with which they were unsuccessful in hunting, cf. Dias de Carvalho's variant, *supra*:42). The tradition associated with the title of *Ngwaad* recounts that, having guided the newcomer to the village of Ruwej, the *kabung* seized the bow which was believed to contain the strength and power (*ulabu*) of the hunter. The noble at Nkalaany (the *Ngwaad*) is still said to be in possession of this bow as evidence

²¹ Praise-phrases/names resort to linguistic forms different from those used in ordinary discourse. The translations presented are as accurate as possible but some terms are incomprehensible even to most native Ruwund speakers.

²² The Aruwund are here compared with young gourds. Many gourds are produced by one single plant and Kasal Katok is thus praised as the place where all the Ruwund population originated.

²³ Cf. *supra*, n.2.

²⁴ The verb *kusong*, "to sprout, to grow", also means "to carve/sculpt" and the sense is that the *nkish* appeared from nowhere as if carved out of a raw piece of wood.

²⁵ Or *cakwiikal* (from verb *kwiikal* or *kukal*, "to snap fingers in greeting and respect to a chief" and thus acknowledging submission). "Cakukal atubung" should therefore be understood as "[to whom] the *atubung* started to snap fingers in submission".

that it was he who first met Yirung (cf. *infra*:177-8). The string of the bow brought by the Luba was made of a liana and not of animal skin as in use among the Aruwund. They called this cord *mukand*, the *Ngwaad* having thus been praised with the name of "Mukand-a-Cibind" (lit.: "*mukand* of Cibind"), he who guards the bow of Cibind Yirung.

With the arrival of the foreign hunter at the lands of the *Sakapemb*, the village of Ruwej was to become the birthplace of Ruwund kingship:

*Mwingandjel, mwa Sakapemb, mwasambela want kuzang.
Weza uzang naaw ayilol.*

"Where the sun rises/in the east, at the place of the *Sakapemb*, there began the chiefship/kingship to grow. There came prosperity and/with the *ayilol*".

The *ayilol*, all chiefs to the exclusion of the land-trustees, are thus dignitaries directly affiliated with the *Mwant Yaav*'s political organization. The office of *cilol* is most definitely linked to the *new* rule founded by the son of Cibind Yirung as opposed to the *atubung* who represent the local chiefs and the *primitive* order of Ruwej's ancestors.

Another praise-phrase for the *Sakapemb* which accounts for the origins of kingship is recited alternatively (as also reported by Hoover, 1978b:639):

*Mwingandjel, mwa Sakapemb, mwasambelaaw kasu kwiiyik.
Ez akamenaku ant ajim.*

"Where the sun rises/in the east, at the place of the *Sakapemb*, it was there that fire was first lit, there the great chiefs came to see it".

It should be noted that fire is associated to chiefship/ kingship. During the installation rituals of both king and *ayilol* a fire is lit in the center of the straw hut built for the occasion (*masas*) and it is not allowed to die out during the whole night while healing practices are taking place (cf. *infra*:219).

With the arrival of Cibind Yirung the Aruwund started their migratory dispersion following the dissident relatives of Ruwej who refused to accept the rule of an outsider.

As mentioned earlier, Kasal Katok was then named "Kaaj-a-Rumwang" (after the verb *kumwang*, "to disperse"). From among the *anamaaku* of Ruwej who left the Ruwund homeland, Karumbu, Ruwej's eldest sister, is believed to have returned later. Today a female dignitary at Musumb, the *Nakabamb*, perpetuates her name²⁶. As the traditions recount, Karumbu was summoned by Ruwej and her relatives after a prolonged absence. She returned to the *Mwant Yaav*'s court alone leaving her people behind as representatives of her power in lands other than the Ruwund. These were to become village chiefs, the *Nakabamb* having a number of subordinate *ayilol* in Cokwe and Lunda-Ndembu territories. Her son Ciseng, born during the exile, became himself a chief in Cokwe country (at Sandoa). She is said to be *Maaku wa Cok* ("mother of the Cokwe") as it was among these peoples that she gave birth to Ciseng. The Lunda-Ndembu address her in much the same terms, Cokwe and Lunda-Ndembu being referred to as "children" (*aan*) of the *Nakabamb*. The Aruwund speak of her feats in a tone of admiration: "What a woman! [a woman] who left with men to far away places like this and conquered lands!" (*mband-a-muntu akaya naaw amakuuny mu jindond jilemp mwaamu ni kukwaat mangand*). For this she was entitled *Nakabamb* (lit.: "she of conquering", from *kubamb*, "to conquer").

Another mythical place linked to the Ruwund motherland and the birth of kingship is *Mwiibwaaz* (lit.: "at Ibwaaz") situated by the forest referred to as *Mwiipesh* (lit.: "at Ipeshe"). The *Mukaciland* was the village chief in this area (located not far from Kasal Katok, to the east of the Kajidij River) which Cibind Yirung was to visit in search of

²⁶ Some informants, however, refuse to consider the *Nakabamb* as heiress of Karumbu claiming that Ruwej's eldest sister has no representative in the Ruwund political system and that the *Nakabamb* represents a younger *mwanaamaaku* (sister/cousin) of Ruwej.



Kasopu Ruwaaz²⁷, the blacksmith. The forest of Ipesh is believed to be inhabited by the spirits of the dead ancestors (*akish*). As said in the praise-phrase below, in earlier times Samuland, the father of Muland (who was later ascribed the title of *Mukaciland*), made offerings to the *akish* at Ipesh (from *kupesh*, "to offer/to sacrifice to a spirit"). Nkongal, also a son of Samuland, was said to sacrifice sheep:

*Mwiipesh-pesh, mwapeshaay Samuland, Nkongal wapesh
amikoku. Mwiibwaaz-bwaaz mwiiyomb diit, mwiiyombalaj
kwol kwetu.*

"At Ipesh, where Samuland made offerings, Nkongal sacrificed sheep. At Ibwaaz, in the forest Iyomb [a forest from where one only emerges with difficulty; from verb *kwiiyomb*, "to be difficult"], at the Yombalaj [river name] is our home".

The sites enumerated above delimit the native land of the people of Ipesh, the so-called Akangurung²⁸. The *Mukaciland* (representing Muland, the youngest son of Samuland) was their chief and any incumbent of this title will recite the praise-phrase above as his own and that of his village, Ciland. Being Kasopu Ruwaaz, in former times, a sub-noble of the *Mukaciland*, his daughter (*mwaan*) Kamong is considered a "child" (*mwaan*) of the village chief *Mukaciland*. Some informants explicitly view the relationship between the *Mukaciland* and Kasopu as that of siblings/cousins (*anamaaku*) in which case, by Ruwund kinship terminology, Kamong would be considered a real *mwaan* (child/great-grandchild)²⁹ of the *Mukaciland* who then becomes her *taat'uku* (father/great-grandfather). This is the kinship relation which relates the *cilol* from the Nkalaany entitled

²⁷ Or "Kasop" (in some pronounciations), a name claimed to derive from an old Uruwund verb *kusop*, or *kusopul* (?), "to forge". "Ruwaaz" is by some informants thought to be related to *diiyaaz*, meaning "smithy".

²⁸ Term derived from *ngurung*, an antelope (bushbuck, cf. Hoover, 1976). The people of Ciland are said to have lived in the bush (*mwiiisuku*), that is in the wild, in the same environment with the antelope. The people of Ipesh are also called Iin Ipesh.

²⁹ Cf. note 7 for a definition of this kinship term.

Mukaciland to the *Rukonkish*, the female dignitary at Musumb who represents Kamong, the second wife of Cibind Yirung and the symbolic mother/aunt (*maaku*)³⁰ of the Ruwund king.

Commentary on the central myth by "minor" oral traditions - including both praise-phrases/names and the narratives to which high offices are attached - turns the Ruwund epic of state formation into a story of overwhelming complexity. All Ruwund dignitaries (quite a few hundreds in Kapanga zone alone) can trace their past in relation to the *Mwant Yaav* and other nobles, some attributing the origin of their titles to the time of Ruwej and Cibind Yirung, others claiming a more recent affiliation with the dynasty of the *Ant Yaav* (sing.: *Mwant Yaav*). In this latter case, however, - and as a result of positional succession - the Aruwund are always vague and often in disaccord as to which *Mwant Yaav* they are referring to and most accounts could, for that matter, be crammed into the reign of any one *Mwant Yaav*. The *ayilol*, in turn, have their own sub-nobles (*anvubu*) or other subordinate *ayilol* whose title traditions relate them to the principal dignitary to whom they are linked. Finally, representing the local ancestors, the *atubung* trace the story of their respective titles to the time of Ruwej, prior to the arrival of the Luba hunter.

All the narratives as well as the praise-phrases/names of the titleholders who claim that their office originated at the time of Ruwej and Yirung add on and detail episodes recounted in the main foundation myth. The accuracy of the events told in the latter can thus be verified by recalling the former "minor" traditions. In this validating process praises of high office play a vital role as they are not (like other narratives) exposed to change due to the narrator's individual innovation but are scrupulously memorized word

³⁰ For a full description of the relationships encompassed by this term cf. chapter III.

by word throughout the generations. Consequently, the procedure of clarifying, enriching and refining the contours of the main myth by resorting to its minor offshoots is an inexhaustable task.

The intrusion of "private" myths into the central, more "public" tradition accounts to a large extent for the discrepancies between the different variants of the foundation epic, thus invalidating the methodological procedure of selecting one narrative to the detriment of other "less credible" versions. Hoover's dilemma over Ruwej's sterility in the myth illustrates this point. The author selects as the genuine version the one that speaks of Ruwej as a barren woman and which claims that the mother of the first *Mwant Yaav* was Yirung's second wife, Kamong. This is indeed what the system of perpetual kinship would lead us to assume as there are two dignitaries in the royal court, the *Nswaan Murund* and the *Rukonkish*, who perpetuate the two wives of Yirung, Ruwej and Kamong. If the aim is to confirm the authenticity of an oral account this is, undoubtably, conclusive evidence, although not proof of its *historical* authenticity.

Despite the fact that this version is indeed the most popular and widespread in Kapanga zone, other accounts have been recorded which are also supported by minor and more peripheral oral traditions making them sources of equal reliability. In the variant recounted by Dias de Carvalho, for instance, Ruwej is fertile and the mother of the first king while the Sanga variant of Roland claims that Ruwej had children by earlier consorts. Mastak also says that she was only childless *with Cibind Yirung* (cf. *supra*:43). Disconcerting as these accounts may appear to the ethnohistorian, they find ample support in the Ruwund symbolic framework.

The Sanga account, for one, is immediately legitimized by other traditions of high office, namely that of the *Mwant Rumang*, a noble at Nkalaany. This dignitary represents Ruwej's first consort, before the arrival of Cibind Yirung. Contrary to what Dias de

Carvalho's and Duysters' versions insinuate, Ruwej would have had another spouse from whom she conceived a child. Their son would later receive the title of *Muty* who is upheld as one of the highest dignitaries at the royal court. My informants (the present incumbent of the office of *Mwant Rumang* and his relatives) continually stressed - as with Roland's and Mastak's accounts - that Ruwej was fertile with *Mwant Rumang* and only unable to bear offspring with Cibind Yirung. However, all future *Ruwej*³¹, representing the mythical heroine (the later incumbents of the office of *Nswaan Murund*), were compelled to remain barren. The *Mwant Rumang*'s title tradition recounts that when Cibind Yirung arrived Ruwej abandoned her consort to marry the Luba hunter. Infuriated, Mukal (so named before he was entitled *Mwant Rumang*) gathered all the *anamaaku* of Ruwej, her siblings/cousins, to express his intension of leaving Ruwund homeland. As he uttered this announcement he raised his machette and violently slashed a tree making a notch (*cimang*) which signified the taking of an irrevocable decision. The title "Mwant Rumang" is most likely derived from the word "*cimang*"³², the cut left on the tree by this noble on leaving the country of Ruwej.

As we can see, different accounts find substantiating narratives in minor traditions. In fact, narrators resort to their global knowledge of oral tradition and those who are familiar with particular episodes of the more peripheral title myths may accomodate these in the main narrative. As a result, variants of the central myth differ *in so far as they speak at different levels of specifity*. Some narrators will thus remember Ruwej as a single woman before the hunter arrived, neglecting for the purpose of their narrative the story of the *Mwant Rumang*'s title, while others, incorporating this minor tradition, will affirm

³¹ Here in italic to indicate the perpetual office rather than the particular heroine named Ruwej.

³² These incisions were used to mark a tree by someone intending to give it some use later (to make a pirogue, for instance).

that she was already married. By the same token, the teller who is deprived of this additional information will merely expose the heroine's inability to procreate omitting the existence of a son from an earlier consort. As the system of perpetual kinship does not make it necessary to distinguish between the first Ruwej (the mythical heroine) and the future incumbents of the office (who are compelled to abstain from procreating and thus considered sterile), the Aruwund do not feel a need to specify, in a more general account, Ruwej's early pregnancy.

In fact, the institution of perpetual kinship renders irrelevant some of the aspects which at first so preoccupy the researcher. Hence, if *Mwant Rumang* claims that the *Mutiy* is his and Ruwej's real son, other informants (the *Mutiy* himself included) affirmed that that noble is the son of Karumbu, Ruwej's eldest sister. Indeed, according to the Ruwund system of terminology (described in ch.III, cf. also *supra*:n.8), a *mwaan* of Karumbu is a *mwaan* of Ruwej and thus the kinship framework allows room for ambiguity and, consequently, for the teller's personal interpretation. However, while for someone at Musumb the question of determining *Mutiy*'s real filiation might seem an issue of little relevance (the kinship system itself dispensing with these sort of definitions), for the Nkalaany chief *Mwant Rumang* it is a matter of the utmost importance. By declaring his relationship with Ruwej to be a consummated alliance he is able to claim a closer tie to the princess therefore strengthening his position within the Ruwund symbolic hierarchy. Again, the *atubung* of the Nkalaany will always stress that the *Mutiy* is a son of Ruwej while the new order of the *Mwant Yaav* and its major dignitaries at Musumb are expected to hide or undermine this relationship by dismissing it as not being of biological filiation. Minor oral traditions can thus be evoked or omitted by the narrator willing to display different emphasis of the myth of origin of kingship or attempting to manipulate his repertoire to his better advantage. Also the fluidity conferred to the mythical relationships

by the system of perpetual kinship is undoubtedly responsible for such a wide scope of individual interpretation (as discussed in ch.III; cf. also *infra*:180-1).

This process can also be held to account for Dias de Carvalho's version. Conflicting with all other variants we have analysed previously, this version states that Ruwej was the biological mother of the first *Mwant Yaav* and consequently fertile with Cibind Yirung. However, what might have appeared as an insuperable contention in relation to other accounts is, once more, *a mere shift in the level of specificity* at which the teller "chose" to place his narrative. In fact, Kamong being *mwanaamaaku* of the princess, her *mwaan* is also a *mwaan* of Ruwej. Hence, even in the accounts in which Ruwej is sterile the *Mwant Yaav* is ultimately thought of as having been born out of the alliance between the Ruwund princess and the alien hunter. Kamong appears as a mere intermediary in the bearing of the child which she conceives *on behalf of Ruwej* (as discussed *infra*:70-1). Thus by making the *Mwant Yaav* her true son, Dias de Carvalho's version does no more than stress this fact, placing additional emphasis on the *alliance* between the Ruwund princess and the Luba hunter in the foundation of kingship (as discussed at greater length in ch.II).

In the major myth, therefore, details which are relevant in minor traditions are often left out and *specific* genealogies give place to more *general* and loose kinship ties. This again accounts for some imprecisions in the variants of the foundation epic. In the version of Dias de Carvalho, for instance, Ruwej is said to be a daughter of Iyaal (note that the term *mwaan*, which his informants might have used to designate "daughter", also means "great-granddaughter", among other relationships) while other narratives make Nkond the father of Ruwej. Indeed, more detailed title narratives make it clear that Ruwej is a child of Nkond as testified by her name, Ruwej-a-Nkond (lit.: "Ruwej of Nkond", meaning "(real) daughter of Nkond"). However, at a more general level it may be

inconsequent to state the princess's specific genealogy, and the indication of her descentance from the main ancestor, Iyaal-a-Mwaaku, judged adequate for the purpose of that narrative.

As we move from more specific title traditions to the nuclear myth of origin of kingship the actions of less prominent characters may be lost or attributed to related main heroes. Some variants, for instance, indicate that the *Mwiin Katet*, the assistant of the *Ngwaad* (and not the *kabung* himself), was the first to have met the Luba hunter. This is corroborated by the *Ngwaad*'s praise-phrase *Urund ni Mwiin Katet* ("friendship with the *Mwiin Katet*"). However, in the public myth the actions of secondary heroes are often ascribed to the principal dignitaries to whom the former are attached. Lesser characters fade out in favour of heroes of more significance, hence the *Mwiin Katet*'s role in the myth is often attributed to the *kabung Ngwaad*. The same happens to Kasopu Ruwaaz, Kamong's father, who is omitted in various narratives in favour of *Mukaciland*, the main chief. Hence, Kamong is most often referred to as "the *Mukaciland*'s *mwaan* (daughter/niece/granddaughter, cf. *supra*:n.8)". Finally, in Dias de Carvalho's narrative Ruwej takes over the role of Kamong who is perceived, as pointed out earlier, as a secondary character acting merely on Ruwej's behalf in the bearing of Yirung's child (cf. *infra*:70-1).

We now become aware that the study of the myth of origin of the Ruwund state is far more intricate a task than a mere evaluation of the different variants. As I explained, it is not only the different versions of the main myth which have to be considered. The Ruwund account of the foundation of kingship, which I chose to call a "major" oral tradition, constitutes the nucleus of a wider network of "minor" narratives relating to specific office titles which add to and elaborate on the main tradition. The minor stories,

not being of common knowledge, may or may not be recalled by the narrators as the details incorporated into the main narrative depend upon the *raconteur* in question, his knowledge of the title traditions and, eventually, his symbolic and political status. Different tellers of the kingship origin story may play down certain episodes and highlight others conveying *different levels of specificity* to their narration as they digress in a more or less detailed manner into the title histories.

The boundaries between the major myth and the minor traditions attached to it are obviously rather blurred (after all the major myth itself can be seen as formed by "minor" title histories of the *main* Ruwund dignitaries, such as the *Nswaan Murund*, the *Rukonkish* and the king himself) even if there is some sort of general "common sense" as to the details that "belong" to the more public myth as opposed to those which concern the personal title histories in particular and should thus be left out of the main narrative. The Ruwund foundation epic should indeed be perceived as a true "constellation of myths" and only as such can its full understanding be attained. The Aruwund themselves resort to the discussion of peripheral title histories in the elucidation of episodes which, during the narration of the central myth, might become a point of contention. As I tried to clarify some of the contradictions in the versions by digging into more "private" stories I was, thus, merely following the methodological procedure which the Aruwund themselves choose to utilize in order to verify or implement the accuracy of an oral account.

CHAPTER II

ON THE THRESHOLD OF CULTURE

Culture heroes or the origin of kingship II

Since Vansina's publication of *De la tradition orale* in 1961, ethnohistorians have been opposed to structuralists in the analysis of Central African oral traditions of state formation. Their academic debate on the historical value of oral sources will be taken up in this chapter by examining further the Ruwund epic of kingship origin and the recurrent Central African image of the foreign hunter, founder of a new civilization.

In contention with the ethnohistoric approach, and following de Heusch's proposal in his *Le roi ivre ou l'origine de l'État* (1972), I shall examine the image of the Ruwund alien hunter, Cibind Yirung, as an *ideological* construct. However, while de Heusch attributes the success of the "civilizing mission" to Cibind Yirung alone, whom he considers a "culture hero" and the bearer of kingship, this chapter will sustain that the Ruwund foundation epic reveals a process of social *renewal* rather than the introduction of a *foreign* civilization in the midst of a more rudimentary order. Indeed, as I will be demonstrating, the ultimate source of Ruwund power is found *within* the autochthonous culture itself whose role in the foundation of kingship should not be undermined. This being so, I shall assert that we need to review the image of the foreign hunter as that of a "culture hero" and bearer, *par excellence*, of a new civilization.

I

The ethnohistoric view of the role of the "héros civilisateur" in Central African oral traditions is not yet unanimously shared. This is particularly the case of the Ruwund account of the foundation of state and the arrival of the hunter prince Cibind Yirung at the kingdom of Ruwej, the Ruwund princess¹. Among the diverse interpretations Vansina suggested that the theme of the Luba hunter and subsequent "love story" with Ruwej meant a Luba political conquest in Ruwund country (1966:78). Miller, in turn, considers that the figures in the Ruwund tradition of state origin represent permanent political positions, not individuals. The epic would thus speak of Ruwej as a permanent title rather than narrating the activity of any of its particular incumbents. By the same token, *Cingud*, *Cinyam* and *Ruwej*² represented subordinate offices of a senior title, *Iyaal-a-Mwaaku*. These positions would be linked by perpetual kinship ties (thus accounting for the genealogical terminology used in the narrative) by means of which *Iyaal-a-Mwaaku*'s titleholders refer to these three lower ranked positions as "children". The disagreement between the father and his two sons over the palm wine would eventually represent power struggles between perpetual offices, *Iyaal-a-Mwaaku*'s death standing for "the ritual elimination of this position from the Lunda system of political titles" (1972:572). Within this context the arrival of the hunter-hero would be a metaphor for Luba political influence, the *Ruwej* having turned to the Luba for help in overcoming the threat which the *Cingud* and the *Cinyam* represented to the Aruwund (*ibid.*:572-3).

Miller's interpretation, however appealing, makes the reconstruction of a hypothetical chronology for the early Ruwund history a less viable work. Since the

¹ On Cokwe figurative representations of the Ruwund culture hero Cibind Yirung cf. M.- L. Bastin, 1978.

² In italic to mean office titles rather than individual names.

traditions refer only to perpetual positions and not to individuals, many incumbents of a title may have ruled during the episodes recounted (which Miller organizes in four phases of Ruwund historical development, cf. *ibid.*:573). Yet this position is in turn counter-argued by J.J. Hoover who is inclined to accept Ruwej and Cibind Yirung as actual historical individuals (cf. 1978b:239).

Within this context of historical interpretation de Heusch's *Le roi ivre* causes, no doubt, some commotion as he proposes to understand the oral traditions of the Zaïrian savanna as "myths" sharing structural affinities and inscribed in one and the same symbolic *continuum*. Since then, however, compromising views have been suggested by ethnohistorians, the theoretical tools of their more recent proposals being clearly layed out in Miller's "Introduction" to *The African Past Speaks* (1980).

According to these scholars, the oral traditions, which ultimately relate historical events, are enveloped in a mythical coating resulting from the use of techniques of narration which, in an oral environment, are built upon the cosmological and perceptual concepts of the teller's culture. This interpretation upholds that complex realities are "compressed" and encoded in "deceptively simple statements of meaning", in "clichés" or "stereotypes" (Miller, 1980:7), and episodes or stories are developed by the oral narrator to explain these historical clichés. Thus, in their view real events are submitted to a process of "structuring" by which historical data might acquire phrasings that express the beliefs and mental categories of the narrators (cf. *ibid.*:13), forming what the historians would treat as a "mythical outgrowth" of an oral history. In this process of structuring, the collective aspect of memory plays a fundamental role (cf. Vansina, 1980).

Within this frame of thought ethnohistorians are unanimous in recognizing the

motif of the alien prince, founder of a new civilization, as an elementary narrative theme or cliché built on some kind of historical event. This point of view obviously stands in contention with de Heusch's analysis in *Le roi ivre* in which he treats the refined foreign hunter Cibind Yirung as the Ruwund counterpart of Mbidi Kiluwe (from the Luba mythical cycle), also a hunter bearer of exquisite manners which he would introduce in the rather uncouth realm of Nkongolo. De Heusch concludes that "... la problématique du roi-chasseur s'inscrit en Afrique centrale dans un vaste champ de transformations" (1982:193), that is, in one and the same mythological universe based on a *common* symbolic language. Within this *continuum* hunting would be a metaphor for the foundation of sacred kingship (1982:193) and the wide recurrence of the hunter-hero motif a proof of its ahistoricity.

The frequency with which the foreign hunter image appears in these accounts has also fueled the reverse argument among ethnohistorians who assert that the same cliché is often used by diverse cultures to convey *specific but similar* historical processes. To these scholars "...borrowing and modification of particularly expressive and relevant clichés ought to produce precisely the varying historicity that scholars have noted in the southern savanna" (Miller, 1980:31). Thus, Schechter in his analysis of the Lunda-Kanongesha version of the foundation epic (1980) suggests that the Central African peoples use the same clichés and thus a common system of historical notation because this system is built upon shared cosmological categories (*ibid.*:113), that is, it is issued from one and the same symbolic universe. Hence Schechter postulates that clichés in oral traditions, if concealing real historical events, "may well reveal a people's world view" (*ibid.*:118) and, thus, have symbolic meaning.

We appear therefore to be reaching an impasse in this controversy in that,

having agreed on the symbolic dimension of oral traditions (Vansina himself has recently declared all oral historian's data to be myth, cf. 1980:262), the ethnohistorians have developed a consistent framework of analysis on the grounds of a more compromising concept of "history" which aims to dilute "myth" and "history" as dichotomous and exclusive categories (cf. Miller, 1980:20,47,49). With this set of redefined conceptual notions these scholars have often succeeded in using to their own benefit arguments put forward in the name of the symbolic approach to oral sources. However, despite the consistency displayed by the improved ethnohistoric theoretical framework, the task of disclosing the actual historical meaning from a presupposed mythical vestment remains a topic of contention. It is at this point that I would like to question the efficacy of the historical approach to oral tradition.

Let us again look at the interpretations proposed by Vansina, Miller and Hoover for the presence of the hunter-hero image in the Ruwund epic. Although all three recognize in oral traditions rhetorical devices that conceal historical events or processes, their hypotheses do not reach an accord *as to the "true" content of the clichés* used in the narrations. As a result, an accurate, even approximate, reconstruction of the past remains an arduous and arbitrary task. Did the arrival of Cibind Yirung in the kingdom of Ruwej mean military conquest; is it a metaphor for Luba influence or a sign of cultural borrowing? Do the names in the accounts refer to actual individuals or do they stand for perpetual titles? Given these divergent propositions, hopes for the reconstruction of early Ruwund history are rather bleak leaving historians anxiously awaiting an eventual confirmation from archaeological research. Moreover, this approach will always fall short of a full explanation for the *choice* of clichés used by the peoples who narrate oral traditions. Why should the

Aruwund along with their Luba neighbours select the figure of a *hunter as a stereotype meaning conquest or cultural influence*? Since this image is so widespread that it may even be found in the Rwandese dynastic oral literature, an understanding of the choice of cliché is of crucial importance if the aim is to discern myth from history in an oral narrative. As K. Brown and M. Roberts put it: "The 'fabulous history' of a people [and here they borrow M. Sahlins' term] may indeed shape their responses to specific historical incidents in ways which have far-reaching significance" (1980:6).

I believe that ethnohistorians cannot reach an agreement as to the historical meaning of the clichés used in oral traditions because they are tied to the search for a "true history" (with all probability alien to the Ruwund perceptions of a true history itself). They are therefore unable to identify the so-called mental categories which are believed to underlie the building of the stereotypes. Perhaps it is time to ask whether "myth" and "history" are not merely our own impositions upon the Ruwund oral creations. Should this be so, then the attempt at discerning them - unclothing a real past from its mythical garment - might not be at all legitimate. As Schechter puts it "... history is often made to conform to the appropriate cosmological categories" (1980:123) with the result, it is added, of a distortion of the "truth" or the appearance of history in what is totally "false". In any event, it is only by reaching the fundamental principles which underlie the construction of these cultural beliefs that we can identify the Aruwund's own concepts of "history", and thereupon any information useful to the historian. Should historical data be concealed in clichés built upon symbolic constructs, our point of departure would still require an understanding of the people's structure of thought by which (in accordance with the ethnohistoric

view) history is conveyed. Moreover, the intimate relationship between myth and ritual which we find delineated in most contexts - and which I illustrate later (*infra*:ch.V) - leaves us in no doubt that they partake of a framework which is *essentially* symbolical. Schecter himself seconds this idea: "This mechanism of the Lunda³ ritual system certainly seems to say a great deal about their world view...", although he safeguards himself by adding that "...the linkages which it continues to sustain are no less historical in origin for that" (1980:123). I do accept the possibility of myth and ritual being symbolic constructs based upon some kind of historical pretext from which, however, they would have long claimed autonomy. But even though the quest for the origin of oral traditions is a major preoccupation for the historian, it is not, I believe, a main issue. Indeed, although we may recognize a kernel of history in oral tradition (or its hypothetical historical origin), the impossibility of determining its contours and the distortions lying beneath the mythical wrapping renders a view of oral sources as myth a far more fruitful inquiry. I hope to demonstrate this by rethinking the image of the foreign hero, bearer of a new civilization, as an *ideological* construct.

II

In search of a mythological system which would organize in a single structure the invariants of symbolic thought among the peoples of the Zaïrian savanna, L. de Heusch analysed in 1972 the Ruwund epic of the origin of kingship within a set of other oral traditions of state formation. As he demonstrates, this narrative, like its homologous Luba epic, reveals a progression from a coarse and rudimentary

³ Here referring to the Lunda-Kanongesha.

civilization, that of the princess Ruwej, to a more sophisticated political order brought in by an outsider, Cibind Yirung, a hero of refined manners and a skilled hunter (1972:ch.V).

Within the "system of transformations" which, in *Le roi ivre*, makes the transition from the Luba to the Lunda⁴ and Kuba mythologies, the Ruwund oral tradition occupies a central position in that it encompasses episodes of both the Luba and Kuba cycles. Indeed the Ruwund foundation epic begins with the theme, characteristic of the Kuba cycle of Woot (1972:178), of the quarrel between father and sons over the palm wine. This later leads to the "love story" between Ruwej and Yirung, a motif which the author identifies as a transformation of the Luba foundation epic (cf. *ibid.*:199,276).

De Heusch shows that in the Ruwund text the initial episode of the conflict over the palm wine sets patrilinearity in crisis (as the father disinherits his sons) which is threatened subsequently by a matrilineal system (as the sacred bracelet, symbol of royal power, is bestowed upon Ruwej who should in time hand it over to her own children). However, if in the Kuba system this "mytheme" succeeds in displacing patrilinearity in favour of a matrilineal order, in the Ruwund myth the latter is never completely achieved as Ruwej (defeating the course of the Kuba theme) is soon discovered to be a sterile woman and therefore unable to bear offspring to ensure succession. In this way, the matrilineal system is proven inviable and the Kuba theme is aborted and taken over by the Luba motif of the marriage between an indigenous princess and a foreign hunter. The latter episode leads back to the patrilineal system

⁴ Comprising both the Aruwund and other "Lunda" peoples.

that was temporarily endangered (cf. *ibid.*:187) but, this time, the instituted order is a more refined patrilineal system marked by a cultural progression and denoting the rise of kingship (cf. de Heusch, 1972:ch.V).

In the context of his structural analysis, de Heusch insists upon a system of oppositions contrasting the incipient, uncouth and primitive order of Ruwej with the new and more elaborate civilization introduced by Cibind Yirung, whom the author considers a *culture* hero, bearer of the kingship. His analysis of the cosmogonic code as it is presented in the Ruwund-Kahemb creation myth (*ibid.*:M26,224-5) thoroughly corroborates this radical opposition: Cibind, a solar hero, is associated with celestial fire, the rainy season and fertility as opposed to Ruwej, the princess descendant from the chthonian world, who is associated with the moon, terrestrial waters, the dry season and marked by sterility (1972:226).

The conjunction attempted in the foundation of kingship between the civilization of Ruwej and that of Cibind Yirung is thus one of apparent *irreconcilability*. In fact, Ruwej's sterility raised in the myth does not allow her to become the mother of the first *Mwant Yaav*, the real founder of the new state. It is as if she refused to participate in the building of kingship and persisted in distinguishing herself from the political order associated with the foreign hero. Instead it is Kamong, to whom the task of conceiving the first king is entrusted, who assumes the conjunction with Yirung. Ruwej herself remains linked to the *ancestral* order and the *autochthonous* power which she represents together with the *atubung*, the primitive chiefs. In this respect she is opposed to Yirung, the bearer of an *innovating* order leading to the emergence of kingship, who is always to be considered a *foreigner*, alien to Ruwund culture.

In his concern to disclose antithetical pairs which affirm a relationship of opposition between the cultural realm of Yirung and the inferior and more rudimentary order of Ruwej, de Heusch minimizes what is both the reverse and the counterpart of this dichotomous relationship. Founded upon a *disjunction*, the relation between Ruwej and Cibind Yirung is, first and foremost, a relationship of *alliance*, an alliance which is in itself fundamental. It is *the very condition* for the successful emergence of a superior civilization.

Bearer of new teachings, Yirung can only create the conditions for the dawning of kingship with the complicity of Ruwej whose involvement in this process is as instrumental as that of Cibind Yirung whom the myth seems to indicate as the sole bearer of the new order. It is in fact Ruwej who takes the initiative to seduce Yirung encouraging him to stay among her people. In Dias de Carvalho's narrative, for instance, the princess's seductive intentions are explicit: "Lueji [Ruwej], on her part, handed him the lucano [*lukan*] bracelet she had inherited from her father, and thinking that the best way to hold the attention of such a handsome hunter would be to talk with him about the chase, hinged the conversation around that topic" (1890:68 as translated in Turner, 1955:9). Finally she invites him to stay and teach her people the use of the bow and arrow. Later Yirung is offered lodgings in her own home "as Lueji was already trying to prevent him from being attracted to any of her servants and wanted to have him by her side, to watch over him, which was the pretext she used with the Canapumba [*Kanampumb*] who had already prepared his accomodation in the mazembe [*mazemb*], the place where guests are sent to" (1890:69; my translation). Also in this account the princess weds the foreigner only after having *persuaded* the *atubung* into accepting the newcomer (*ibid.*:70) and *it is against her own brothers'*

wishes that she entrusts the sacred insignia to the Luba prince (cf. Duysters, 1958:83; Struyf, 1948:374-5; Byvang, 1937:431 and Dias de Carvalho, 1980:75).

Ruwej, thus, provides all the opportunities for the accomplishment of Yirung's civilizing mission and the opposition between Ruwej and Yirung can, therefore, be better perceived if we are reminded of the close relationship of *alliance* which these two mythological heroes maintain. The dynamic nature of this alliance is in fact responsible for the successful founding of new royalty. I sustain that this shift of perspective provides a much clearer understanding of the ideology of Ruwund kingship.

Let us recall again the theme of the sterility of Ruwej in the foundation myth. By declaring Ruwej's inability to have children, the myth undoubtably claims - in accordance with de Heusch's analysis - an insoluble *disjunction* which opposes the sterility of Ruwej to the fecundity of Yirung (cf. de Heusch, 1972:228). Furthermore, this refusal to conceive the successor of Yirung, *he who would become the first king*, institutes the opposition between the *original* indigenous order (of Ruwej and the *atubung*) and the *new* and more exquisite rule brought by the alien prince. On the other hand, the very same motif of the infertility of the princess is the hinge which allows for the articulation of the two mythical themes (recurrent in the Kuba and Luba cycles respectively) by rendering unviable the matrilinearity of the Kuba motif and allowing the intervention of the errant hunter and the return to the patrilineal system (cf. de Heusch, 1972:186-7). The sterility of Ruwej is thus a mytheme *à double face* allowing both to promote *difference* and to undertake a *conjunction* which is equally crucial in the rise of kingship. The conjunction, however, will be fully accomplished

by Kamong who Ruwej herself appoints to conceive the founder of the royal dynasty *on her behalf*. This union of Kamong and the Luba hunter is thus a mere outcome of the alliance which Ruwej herself engaged in with Yirung in the founding of kingship.

Ruwej, the Ruwund princess, appears therefore in the myth as a rather ambivalent character. She represents the local and ancestral power as opposed to the alien civilization which Yirung aims to install, yet she provides every opportunity for the successful advent of the new rule inducing Kamong to pursue the alliance between two realms which, paradoxically, she had at first declared disjunct.

Ruwej and Kamong are thus accomplices in the founding of kingship and this implicit connivance which unites the spouses of Yirung becomes thoroughly intelligible when we consider the totality of the versions of the foundation epic. Indeed in the account I myself collected (which is confirmed by Duysters', 1958:81-6 and Biebuyck's, 1957:797-804), Ruwej and Kamong convey together the ambiguity inherent in the foundation of the new rule. That is, Ruwej institutes a *disjunction* between two opposing elements and Kamong reconciles them in the *alliance* which guarantees the birth of kingship. In the variant of the myth recounted by Dias de Carvalho (1890:58-76), however, Ruwej is a fertile woman and herself the real mother of the first *Mwant Yaav*, the presence of a second woman (Kamong in other narratives) ceasing to be relevant in the sequence of this version. Puzzled at this inconsistency, de Heusch dismisses this version on this point and surrenders, for a moment, in search of the "true" variant, an approach so adverse to the spirit of structural analysis (cf. Lévi-Strauss, 1958:240-42).

Although suspicious and unreliable for de Heusch (1972:187), the fertility of Ruwej in Dias de Carvalho's variant (confirmed by the Kahemb narrative of Struyf,

1948:370-75) appears, on the contrary, to elucidate the nature of the compromise which unites Yirung's spouses. Hence, if in one account Ruwej appears to renounce the conjunction with Yirung (as if refusing to engage in the building of kingship), in Dias de Carvalho's version she openly assumes her ambiguity by undertaking *alone*, in two successive moments, both the *opposition* between the two orders and the *alliance* in which the latter finally engage. These two moments in her behaviour will still remain clearly differentiated in the two titles of office (perpetuated today in the king's court by two female dignitaries) which, according to Dias de Carvalho, are ascribed to the princess and which assume separately the facets of Ruwej's two-fold behaviour. As representative of the *atubung* Ruwej holds the perpetual title of *Nswaan Murund* and in this way emphasizes the *discontinuity* between the pre-existent rule and the reign of Yirung. However, Dias de Carvalho stresses that from the moment Ruwej's son is invested *Mwant Yaav*, the princess is endowed with a new title, that of *Rukonkish* (1980:524), and is thereafter committed to the sovereign for she is considered the "mother" of all kings (*maaku wa Mwant Yaav*).

The Aruwund, consequently, do not seem to consider it indispensable to distinguish, at the mythical level, Ruwej from Kamong. This fact becomes intelligible if we consider that in the Ruwund symbolic framework Kamong is *a mere refraction of Ruwej herself* in order to carry out to the full the alliance which Ruwej had already laid down. Kamong's mythical role is *exclusively* that of conceiving, on behalf of Ruwej, Yirung's child and this is perhaps also suggested by the name Kamong itself which, curiously enough, means "clitoris". The texts in which Yirung has two spouses, therefore, share one and the same concern, that of stressing the local origin of Kamong as well as her close relationship to Ruwej. Kamong is the

daughter/niece/granddaughter (*mwaan*) of the Nkalaany chief *Mukaciland* (cf. *supra*:56) which makes her a faithful representative of the *autochthonous* people and places her in a privileged position to carry out *on Ruwej's behalf* the coming together of the primitive and new realms. Also, as the "daughter" of a chief from Nkalaany (the cradle of the Ruwund kingdom), Kamong is a kinswoman of the princess (cf. Hoover, 1978a:64). According to some informants she is Ruwej's *mwanaamaaku*, her sister/cousin, in which case Kamong's son (*mwaan*) is also a *mwaan* of Ruwej in the Ruwund kinship system (as remarked earlier, *supra*:55). The distance between Kamong and Ruwej as mythical heroines is thus of necessity minimized (giving place to a proximity reinforced by a kinship tie) as in Ruwund symbolic thought Kamong is a mere "double" of the princess carrying out the task in which Ruwej could not involve herself without compromising the duality and antagonism equally indispensable for the birth of the new rule.

III

That the theme of the *alliance* between the local princess and the Luba hunter is as much a constant in the foundation of Ruwund kingship as the motif which *opposes* the two mythical heroes is asserted at other levels of Ruwund ethnography.

As a result of the combined systems of "perpetual kinship" and "positional succession", Ruwej is personified nowadays at the royal village by a female dignitary with the title of *Nswaan Murund*. The *Nswaan Murund*, as the incumbent of Ruwej at the court, and the chiefs known as *atubung* are the holders of the ancestral and autochthonous power, representing today the primitive and rudimentary social system which Cibind Yirung was to find on his arrival in Ruwund lands. Hence, like Ruwej

in the myth, the *Nswaan Murund* and the *atubung* are in a way placed apart from the complex social and political organization which the *Mwant Yaav* was to establish with the founding of the new state. For the original chiefs, the *Mwant Yaav* will always remain, as Yirung his predecessor, *an outsider*, alien to the Ruwund culture which they themselves represent. This being so, the *atubung* do not participate in the life of the royal court where Ruwej represents them through her title of *Nswaan Murund*. Instead, they inhabit the lands between the rivers Nkalaany and Kajidij, the cradle of the Ruwund nation where, according to the oral traditions, the mythical episodes leading to the rise of the state would have taken place.

Representing an order *not submissive* to the rule of Yirung and the power of the *Mwant Yaav*, the *atubung* are, paradoxically, the ritual investors of the king. As Hoover has already remarked the office of the *atubung* "ties the Lunda chief being invested with the *unassimilated* ancestors of the assimilated indigenous population" (1978b:323; my emphasis). After a royal death the *rukan*, the bracelet made of human sinew which is the main object of regalia of Ruwund power, is placed in the safekeeping of the *Nswaan Murund*. This dignitary will retain it in her custody until the new sovereign is taken to the lands of the Nkalaany, the setting which is recalled in the tradition of state formation. Here, in the presence of the *atubung*, the enthronement ceremony takes place in which the newly elected king is given the sacred bracelet.

The royal installation ritual at Nkalaany will only be undertaken, however, some time after the new king has been elected, sometimes up to one year later. A preliminary nomination ritual is thus carried out in Musumb allowing the heir to rule until it is time to embark on the lengthy journey to the Nkalaany (some 80-90

kilometers on foot). However, during this time in which he remains on probation, the newly elected king cannot convoke dignitaries for a public audience. He is designated *Mwaadyaat*⁵ as he can only demand for himself the name of *Mwant Yaav* and the title of the royal dynasty after his investiture with the *rukan* by the *atubung* (for a description of the king's enthronement ritual cf. ch.VI).

The *rukan*, which is the insignia of the *local* power of Ruwej's ancestors, is thus indispensable for the re-establishment of kingship and this becomes intelligible when we take into consideration the duality which characterizes this new rule. The kingship is not, as we saw, merely the work of a foreign hunter. It is in the *old* and decadent order of Ruwej that the successor to the throne (as Cibind Yirung before him) will find the ultimate source and symbol of royal power. The future king is only fully perceived as the legitimate representative of Ruwund power after having received from Ruwej and the *atubung* the bracelet called *rukan*, the insignia of the *autochthonous* authority. The new royalty, it seems, can only be instated if encompassing within itself the highest symbol of its *antagonic* order.

The sacred bracelet, the insignia of royal power, is thus transferred from the *local* chiefs, represented by the *Nswaan Murund* and the *atubung*, to the *Mwant Yaav* as if in every interregnum the indigenous people would retrieve the power handing it over again to the king at the installation ritual. Significantly enough, during a royal interregnum the Aruwund entrust the sovereignty to the principal chief of the *iin mazemb* who are the representatives in Musumb of the ancestral people of Ruwej.

⁵ Other pronunciations are *Mwaadyant*, *Mwaadant* or *Mwaadaat*. As a title it represents "a biological son of a *Mwant Yaav*" (although not the first born son who is called *Mwaanaat*).

The *Sakawaat Nkwaany* (often designated as *Sakawaat Kanampumb*⁶), chief of the *iin mazemb*, will occupy the *Mwant Yaav*'s throne for the period during which a king's funerary rites take place, generally until the day after the royal burial when the newly elected king will pay his substitute to vacate the throne (cf. *infra*:204-5;206). This ceremony is carried out during a public meeting (*citentam*); for the occasion the throne occupied by the *Sakawaat Nkwaany* is placed in the center of the courtyard facing the king's palace. In the presence of the audience the newly elected sovereign will make offers until the *Sakawaat* agrees to the amount of payment to be made and acquiesces in leaving the throne. The *Mwaadyaat* (the elected sovereign) then occupies his royal seat while the chief of the *iin mazemb* resumes his due place sitting on an antelope skin on the ground. The latter then introduces the new king to the population and performs the ritual salutation prostrating himself on the ground (v.:*kubumburik*). This will be the only time in which the *Sakawaat Nkwaany*, representing the *iin mazemb*, will lie on the ground as a sign of submission to the power of the *Mwant Yaav*.

The *Sakawaat Nkwaany* thus guarantees the exercise of the local power of Ruwej during the interregnum. The indigenous authority and the imported sacralized rule, the two principles which together constitute the ideological apparatus of kingship, appear thus engaged in a *cyclical* alternation. The power in the hands of the sovereign is, on his death, legitimately resumed by the native chiefs claiming the seniority of the original order and is, once more, reclaimed by the new *Mwant Yaav* at his investiture. Hence, in every ritual of enthronement, the sovereign has to render himself humble

⁶ For this dignitary accumulates both the offices of *Sakawaat Nkwaany* and *Kanampumb da Mazemb* (cf. *infra*:143).

and submissive before the *atubung* (cf. Dias de Carvalho, 1890:352-53), in this way performing the inversion which will allow for the new order to be instituted.

IV

These considerations draw us to a set of papers written by Gomes da Silva on the "cyclical" conception of time. Benefiting from a comparative approach, the author discusses African and Indo-European representations of a dual sovereignty (1986, 1989:ch.VI). Also in the Indo-European texts analysed, the new order can only emerge from the "alliance of the opposites". The author also points out, rather curiously, that, in this context, it is somehow *the least resourceful* member of the community who appears to gather the attributes enabling the rescue of society from a state of crisis and the re-creation of the social order (cf. 1986:6). Different materials examined by Gomes da Silva repeatedly entrust this task to an inexperienced youngster who would, at first sight, appear to lack the wit and proficiency required to undertake the major task of rebuilding a new order from a decayed social system.

In this context of analysis the variant of the episode of transmission of power to Ruwej recorded in the Methodist publication, *Ngand Yetu*, elucidates the role of the Ruwund princess in the foundation of divine kingship. It states the following:

Nkond had four sons and two daughters, Karumbu and Ruwej. On returning to the village, one day, from a hunting expedition, the sons found their father weaving a mat. A misunderstanding took place concerning the milky coloured water used for dipping the fibres which the children thought to be palm wine. One of the sons hit the father who, irate, declared: "My *rukan* shall not be given to my sons. It will be my daughters who shall receive it".

Some time after, Nkond became seriously ill and, foreseeing his death, sent for his daughters. Karumbu and Ruwej, however, found themselves on the opposite riverbank. On hearing the news they hastened to answer their father's call. Karumbu, the eldest, said to her younger sister: "Let us take the river crossing at Kanyimb". But Ruwej disagreed: "No, by Kanyimb is too far. If we

cross at Kasaaku we will arrive much sooner". After a long discussion Karumbu decided to take the direction of Kanyimb while Ruwej went by Kasaaku.

Ruwej was the first to arrive finding her father already moribund. On seeing her the old chief inquired: "Your eldest sister, where is she?". Ruwej explained that, having gone via Kanyimb, she had not yet arrived. Nkond then said: "it will be you who will succeed me" and, as he uttered these words, he placed the bracelet on her wrist. So matters stood when Karumbu finally arrived to the village. Her father had already passed away and Ruwej was in possession of the *rukan*. Karumbu protested claiming the regalia on the grounds of seniority but Ruwej refused it: "the *rukan* is mine, it was given to me by my father. You arrived too late" (*Ngand Yetu*, 9-11).

Ruwej, to whom Ruwund power is entrusted, is thus *the youngest* amongst the daughters of the chief Nkond. By introducing this version into our analysis we therefore come to realize that the issue at stake in the Ruwund symbolic system is not mainly, as de Heusch sees it, the shift of power from the sons to the daughters (meaning a crisis of the patrilineal system) but the undertaking of power by *the least qualified* of its members in terms of a right to succession.

The fact is that the crisis which Ruwej is to overcome is not the mere fall of the patrilineal system of which de Heusch speaks but, well beyond that, a crisis of power and of the social order *in general*, an order where abuse, indulgence and dissension reigned. Hence, in the narrative related by Dias de Carvalho, Nkond's children were drunkards, lazy and ransacked the population (1890:60). The set of attitudes and the family code itself are here inverted. The children do not respect an elder, who is both a chief and their own father. In Struyf's account it is the chief himself who assumes social degradation: inebriated, Nkond is found lying naked on the ground (1948:371).

The myth appears thus to speak of a society which Ruwej is indeed to rescue from a complete state of crisis and disorder. As in other contexts, the task of restoring

the social order is also here assumed by a personage *unqualified* from the social point of view. Ruwej is a woman and the last-born child in a society where power is understood to be transmitted preferentially to the *senior* amidst the *male* offspring! Moreover, some versions stress that Ruwej had not even become of age when power was entrusted to her (Struyf, 1948:373). Being too young she ruled with the help and advice of the senior nobles (Dias de Carvalho, 1890:63).

Finally, Ruwej exhibits a profile which associates her - if only temporarily - with the devalued aspects of "nature". Considering Ruwej to be the Ruwund counterpart of the licentious king Nkongolo in the Luba epic, de Heusch had foreseen the relation of the Ruwund princess to "nature" as opposed to the "cultural" and "civilizing" hero, Cibind Yirung. Supporting what his analysis seemed already to indicate, the Ruwund context clearly denounces the incestuous feature of Ruwej, also a characteristic of Nkongolo. In fact, and at variance with the most widespread versions of the foundation myth, the Aruwund of Nkalaany recount that Ruwej was married before the arrival of Cibind Yirung with a close relative (*mwanaamaaku*, "brother/cousin") from whom she bore a child, the noble of the royal court named *Mutiy* (cf. *supra*:52-3). As Ruwej falls for the Luba stranger, however, she abandons her first consort. The *Mwant Rumang*, the dignitary at Nkalaany who perpetuates the memory of the neglected husband, is a chief known as "Kamong-a-Isot", a praise-name that alludes to the incestuous relationship which he maintained with Ruwej (*kamong* means "clitoris" and *isot* derives from the verb *kusot*, "to want", in a sexual manner). Being siblings and cousins of Ruwej, the *atubung* are also *anamaaku* of the *Mwant Rumang* who is, consequently, the only *cilol* allowed to parade together with

the *atubung* before the sovereign⁷. Considered a *cirumakan* of the king (term used between men who share the same woman), the *Mwant Rumang* refuses to collaborate (contrarily to his fellow dignitaries from Nkalaany) in the preparations for the *Mwant Yaav*'s enthronement ritual. When in *citentam*, the great public audience, he sits facing his rival, the *Mwant Yaav*, while "looking [him] into the eyes" (*kutal pa mees*) for, as the Ruwund saying goes, *cirumakan ni cirumakan oviil mukaw* ("cirumakan with cirumakan feel jealousy").

In the epic of foundation of kingship among the Aruwund (and most probably also in other Central African contexts, such as the Luba) the foreign hunter, who appears in the myth to possess the true merits of the *héros civilisateur*, is not able to create a new social system alone. The emergence of a new political order as presented in the Ruwund tradition of state formation is dependent on the intervention of *the most feeble* of its members: a woman who is not only the *youngest* in a series of siblings but is also involved in the practice of *incest*.

Associated to the negative values of "nature", Ruwej chooses as her partner a hero whose attributes place him far *beyond* the limits of culture. Distinguished by exquisite manners (the hunter does not eat or drink in public), by a physical splendour and an expertise in the handling of the bow and arrow, Cibind Yirung is, above all, a *foreigner* who, alien to Ruwund culture, is situated beyond its modest confines. He is, in fact, a *hypercultural* hero in that he assumes *in excess* the culture which Ruwej underrepresents. However, this "excessive" diligence and determination with which

⁷ The *Mukaciland* is also allowed to do so in the eventuality of his coming to Musumb on the *atubung*'s official visit to the royal court.

Yirung assumes the rules of culture projects him *outside* of its realm, conferring upon him an ambiguity which draws close to that of Ruwej herself. The hyperexogamous marriage of Yirung is, after all, as inadequate a rule in the universe of culture as the hyperendogamy which characterizes the native princess. What is more, a hunter is one who renounces a sedentary life and is detached from the constraints of culture. Among the Aruwund he is often excluded from the circle of social relations, he is a solitary type camping here and there in temporary shelters, cooking his own meals, drinking his own palm wine or even abstaining from it and, in general, not sharing or engaging in the pre-set rules of social interaction.

This examination of the Ruwund material also calls for a reviewed understanding of the categories of "nature" and "culture" in the analysis of oral traditions. Although valid as instruments of thought, we are constantly reminded, when we think of the opposition between Ruwej and Yirung, that they are *essentially* pliable categories engaged in *continuous* interaction. Ruwej and Yirung cannot, in reality, be equated with the categories of "nature" and "culture" in the strict and straightforward manner presented by de Heusch as they fade into one another in the foundation of kingship. Despite the fact that Ruwej momentarily assumes *negative* values she provides Ruwund society with the dawning of a higher order while Cibind Yirung, overrepresenting the *positive* values of culture, is as much an ambiguous character in the myth as the Ruwund princess herself. Being defined outside of the realm of culture, his behaviour is equally *inadequate* in cultural terms.

In fact, the antagonism which simultaneously opposes and unifies Ruwej and Yirung in the rise of kingship can only be surmounted by the intervention of a *third* entity. The king who founds the monarchy is not in fact Cibind Yirung *but his son*,

the first of the dynasty of the *Ant Yaav* (sing: *Mwant Yaav*). Indeed, if Ruwej seems unqualified from the social point of view to inaugurate the royal dynasty being the youngest amongst the daughters of Nkond and associated with the degraded values of society, the Luba hero appears equally unsuitable to fulfil the role of founder-king. Cibind Yirung is a foreigner and as such considered an intruder within Ruwund culture. To acclaim him as king would consequently mean to surrender irreversibly the Ruwund identity to an alien civilization.

Both placed *outside* the limits of culture, Ruwej and Yirung are thus *excluded* from power. The third, he who reunites the opposites, is therefore an element *belonging* to culture and as such competent to found a new order within its boundaries. It is as though in the foundation of Ruwund kingship the *dualism* of sovereignty could only be conceived by resorting to a third party. The triadic structure appears to be, thus, the sole representation able to mediate the antinomy that allows for the reorganization of the social world. It is in this quality of *conciliator of an antinomy* that the first sovereign will carry out the task of founding the royal dynasty. It is so that the *Mutiy*, despite being a son (*mwaan*) of Ruwej (cf. *supra*:54), cannot assume the role of founder-king. Conceived from the alliance between Ruwej and the *Mwant Rumang*, close relatives and both representatives of the autochthonous power, the *Mutiy* is the outcome of an union between two that are *alike*.

On the other hand, again as a result of a standpoint which stresses "opposition" to the detriment of "alliance" (these two aspects being both constitutive parts of a dichotomy), de Heusch attributes the success of the "civilizing mission" to Cibind Yirung alone. Defined as a "cultural" hero by opposition to Ruwej he is, for the author, *the bearer par excellence* of kingship. De Heusch's argument, thus, has us

believe that kingship is an order *alien* to the indigenous population which, *coming from outside*, penetrates the *other* more rudimentary Ruwund civilization, presided over by the native princess.

However, as we are now aware, in the Ruwund myth a new political order is installed in a society in decay thanks to the *combined* effort of Ruwej and the alien hunter Cibind Yirung. Indeed, this analysis suggests, it is the local princess who in the midst of an exhausted culture is capable of instigating the process of social regeneration and, therefore, it is legitimate to conclude that the very germ of royal power can be found *within* the autochthonous culture of Ruwej. If that is so, the myth of state origin would indeed speak of a *re-creation* of Ruwund society rather than of the introduction of an alien civilization penetrating *from the exterior* with Cibind Yirung. In fact, having arrived in the lands of Ruwej in possession of the Luba symbol of royalty (the *cimbuuy*, a small hatchet), Cibind subsequently renounces this hatchet (which he returns to his brother in Luba country, cf. version of Dias de Carvalho, 1890:69) to adopt instead as insignia of the new sovereignty the bracelet of the Ruwund ancestors, symbol of the decadent order of Ruwej. It is therefore in the *old* society in decline that Yirung finds the instrument and ultimate source of royal power.

Should we consider the Ruwund myth a tale of social *renewal* and the foundation of royalty a process generating *from within* rather than from outside, then Cibind Yirung can no longer be viewed as *the* "culture hero" *par excellence* and his mission that of bearer of a new and higher civilization. It is not a *new* order which is at stake but the renewal of an old and exhausted social system in which the role of the autochthonous princess as bearer of "culture" must be fully recognized. In this context the image of the *héros civilisateur* is, instead, "reduced" to a mere *ideological*

construct which allows society to conceptualize its own re-creation (cf. *infra*:261-2). Indeed, characterized by features which place her in the *lower* extremity of culture, Ruwej can only elect for her term of opposition a hero who defines himself in its *upper* limit. The mythical figure of the alien hunter answers this logical imperative of instituting the opposites. It is in fact their positioning *in the extremes of the outer limits of culture* which allows Ruwej and Cibind Yirung to claim solidarity in the emergence of a new order. In the myth, it is the boundaries of the social order that are defined, as if it were *at the edges of culture* that society would rescue the necessary elements for its reorganization. And in each ritual of enthronement society resorts once more to the definition of its limits in order to institute within their confinement a renewed and higher order. It is so that power is claimed by the local system of Ruwej in each interregnum, only to be retrieved later by the newly invested *Mwant Yaav*, representing both Cibind Yirung and his son, the founder-king.

CHAPTER III

THE KING IS "ONE OF US"

Claiming perpetual ties among Ruwund aristocracy

I

The institution of "positional succession", described by A.I. Richards for the Bemba of Northern Zambia (1940, 1950), has been known to be a feature of the Lunda system ever since I. Cunnison's writings in the 1950s on the eastern Lunda of the Luapula Valley. Among the Luapula peoples - as among the Bemba - the name of a dead man (or woman¹) as well as his status or office are transferred to a living member of his matrilineage who is designated to "replace" the deceased in the social system. Thus, with the passing of generations various incumbents inherit a name and, in turn, share the attributes, past experiences and status associated with that name.

Among this Lunda group inheritance of a social position becomes most important in the case of the death of an adult and, particularly, of a married person. The succeeding incumbent will then also inherit the wife and children of the deceased. In fact, as part of the identification of the successor's social standing with that of the dead person, the holder of a name also becomes the heir of his predecessor's kinship relations. By this token the kinship terminology does not take into account the passage of genealogical time, the recipient of a name being often addressed by the very same kinship terms which were used for his eponymous predecessor. This system of "perpetual kinship" (Cunnison, 1956),

¹ Henceforward, for the sake of simplification, I shall use masculine forms only.

thus, links names and positions *independently* of the genealogical relationship which might exist between the actual holders of the name at any one time. It establishes ties between "positions", not individuals. A whole set of fixed kinship relations is therefore inherited and perpetuated by succession to a deceased person.

Names which have attained social importance override lesser names. Cunnison notes (1956:38; 1959:104-5; also Richards, 1950:224) that although the inheritance of most names takes place, those for which no major achievements are recognized are "swallowed" by more important ones so that the former often die out after two or three incumbents. Only the most eminent positions, such as those of founders of a matrilineage, headmen or names which relate to oral traditions are thus likely to endure. As women seldom occupy leading roles within the lineage it is less frequent to find a female position inherited through a number of succeeding generations.

In both the Luapula and Bemba systems the inheritance of titles of chiefship and high office is to be considered within the more generalized phenomenon of "positional succession" which affects commoners as well as prominent figures (cf. Richards, 1950:224). Unlike the Luapula Valley case, however, the institutions of perpetual kinship and positional succession among the Aruwund do not apply to the overall population. Here, only dignitaries holding names relating to oral traditions are succeeded in a manner similar to that which Cunnison describes. Hence, as discussed earlier, the name of Ruwej, the Ruwund autochthonous princess, has been handed down throughout generations and is perpetuated nowadays at the *Mwant Yaav's* court by a female dignitary who is also addressed by the title of *Nswaan Murund*. Similarly, the position of Kamong, the second wife of the Luba hunter in the foundation myth, has also an incumbent at the Ruwund capital entitled *Rukonkish*. The king himself is considered to be the heir and successor of Cibind Yirung, the foreign prince, and of his son, he who became the first in the dynasty

of the *Ant Yaav*. All other Ruwund officials, both in the court and in peripheral villages, take on names recalled by oral traditions.

As among the Bemba and Eastern Lunda, it is not merely the position and status of a high office which are inherited but, to a certain extent, all the past experiences of each of its previous incumbents. Hence a noble narrating the oral traditions of his title does not necessarily make a distinction between the actions and episodes that he was involved in and those which pertain to previous holders of the name. He might, therefore, narrate them all using the first person singular form (cf. also Cunnison, 1956:46). When asked to recall the mythical episode of the arrival of Cibind Yirung in Ruwund country, for instance, the present Ruwej in Musumb elaborated on the beauty and charm of the alien hunter as if she herself had been present at the time of the event. Similar instances can be read in Cunnison's ethnography:

"I recall hearing the history of a Shila of Nkondo Lagoon on the Congo bank (...) A Bwilile lives there also, and their stories conflict (...) The Shila was relating his history and the Bwilile was also present. When the name of the old Bwilile figured in the history, he simply pointed to the present incumbent of the name. The point came where the stories diverged. They started to shout at one another, each speaking in the first person, and to listeners it was as if the events had occurred only yesterday" (1959:238).

Cunnison's writings fully expand on this feature of positional succession, which is so vividly expressed when the Lunda tell their traditions. "In the histories", he writes, "the incumbents of the names in the same way belong both to the present and the past. They belong to the present because, in the histories, they recount in the first person to their listeners the actions of all the incumbents of the name; and they belong to the past because they speak not only of themselves, but also of the ancestors, whose actions created the present situation" (*ibid.*:46).

As time goes on the individual names of the successors to a Ruwund high position

will indeed be forgotten in favour of the perpetual name, that which is, in one way or another, linked to the oral traditions. Fellow villagers, however, will still be able to recall the names of some previous holders of chiefly titles in their own or neighbouring villages but in more distant areas only the office names will be remembered. And, as time depth increases, substitutes totally merge with their predecessors. Despite this general pattern, however, I did come across instances in which one or two early holders of a title were still remembered in connection with some outstanding event but this knowledge of remote times was restricted, in most cases, to the incumbent's close family circle or to the rightful heirs to the office in question. In such circumstances, heated discussions on the identity of these incumbents took place.

In the case of the most prominent officials living at the royal court a more extensive recollection of individual titleholders is possible and, in the particular case of the Ruwund king, a long list of incumbents is of common knowledge. This became even more so as missionaries and early colonial administrators attempted to establish royal chronologies thus giving the Aruwund access to written (though diverse) listings of their dynastic kings (cf. *Ngand Yetu*, 1963:19-24;38-40 and Duysters, 1958, for instance).

In the succession to high office among the Aruwund the name by which dignitaries are commonly addressed is not the name of the founder of an office but the title which was bestowed upon him on some remarkable event. In fact, narrators of a title history often distinguish between the name of the founder of an office (*diijin da kusambish*, "the first name", "the name of the beginning") and the title(s) of which he or she became the first holder (*diijin da want*, "the name of chiefship"). Title narratives - those which I have earlier named "minor traditions" - always recall the *diijin da kusambish* of an office, that is, the name of its first incumbent, as it is mainly with the first ancestor of a title that a successor will identify. Despite the lapse of memory concerning individual names of the

various holders of a title, the first having been entrusted an office will always be remembered and his personal name will be handed down with the tradition relating to that title. For instance, "Nakabamb" is the title which in oral tradition was given to Karumbu, Ruwej's eldest sister, in recognition of her achievements in Cokwe and Ndembu countries (cf. *supra*:49). Karumbu was the first *Nakabamb* in the same way that Ruwej was the first holder of the chiefly title of *Nswaan Murund*. However, if we can expect most Aruwund to recall the name of the first incumbent of a title such as that of *Nakabamb* (being an eminent court dignitary and representing a central figure in the foundation epic), founders of lesser titles are, again, only remembered by the noble's relatives and among neighbours (in his or nearby villages) who show a keen interest in the oral traditions.

The histories of office titles also register the various "names of chiefship" which may, eventually, be attributed to one and the same perpetual position in the course of the history of its incumbents. In this event, it is the most important (or the last) of the names which is used to designate the office. This is the case, for instance, with the title of *Ngwaad-a-Ciying*, the *kabung* who, in the foundation epic, is the first to meet the foreign hunter after going into the forest to collect his gourd of palm wine (cf. *supra*:38-9). This title story tells that Ruseny - this was the original name (*diijin da kusambish*) of the one who would eventually be called *Ngwaad* - was at first addressed by the chiefly name of *Mwant Ruseny*. Later, however, he came to be known by the title of *Mwant Ambwiiz* as he regularly presented Ruwej with elephant shrews (*ambwiiz*) he trapped. One day, however, he trapped a *ngwaad* (red-necked francolin or spur fowl, according to Hoover, 1976) for which Ruwej congratulated him with the exclamation "waying kwey!" ("I congratulate you on your success/luck!"). Henceforth he became *Ngwaad-a-Ciying* (*ciying* is derived from the verb *kuying*, "to succeed"), this title being the one that remained to designate the present office. It should be pointed out, though, that despite the manner in

which the Aruwund present these events, the three titles recited by the narrative may not have been bestowed upon a single individual, called Ruseny, at different times of his life. Rather they may have come into usage in the course of the lives of different incumbents of that very name.

As among the Bemba and Eastern Lunda, "perpetual kinship" allows all Ruwund court dignitaries to maintain some sort of kinship tie with one another and with the king which they can trace through the particular stories of their office. Defining the features of the terminology system in which Ruwund kinship operates is, therefore, indispensable in understanding both the institutions of "perpetual kinship" and "positional succession".

The Ruwund kinship terminology

In dealing with Ruwund kinship, a bilateral system, we should take into account the general classificatory nature of its terminology by means of which a term used by ego for a certain *Y* can, in all cases, be extended to *Y*'s siblings and cousins (*Y*'s *anamaaku*, sing.: *mwanamaaku*). (For the purpose of the following discussion only I shall indicate this characteristic by placing an asterisk (*) after the term to which it refers, e.g. "parents*" should be read as: "parents and also their own siblings and cousins")². In consequence of this general rule all terms are classificatory with the exception of those used for 'wife' (*mukajend*, pl.: *akajend*³) and 'husband' (*nfumwend*, pl.: *anfumwend*) which are descriptive and thus refer to a single relationship.

² In subsequent chapters this indicator will be dropped as the reader should be familiar with this rule.

³ Some kinship terms do not exist in Uruwund except in their contracted-possessive forms. In such cases I shall use the third person singular possessive (*-end*) and underline it to indicate that it is a possessive suffix contracted with the kinship term. Hence *mukajend* (*mukaj-* + the possessive *-end*) means "his/her wife".

As shown in *Figure 2*⁴, the Ruwund kinship system only provides terms for four ascendant and four descendant generations; kinship ties and genealogical memory fade away beyond that. A few principles underlying the system as well as the basic nomenclature are systematized below:

In all but ego's and the two adjacent generations, men and women who can trace a relationship to ego are addressed by the term(s) indicated for each generation in *Figure 2*, regardless of whether this relationship is one of kinship or alliance. In generations 2, 3 and 4 (ascendant or descendant) there is, therefore, no distinction between kin and affines, nor does the nomenclature highlight distinctions of sex except for generation +3. For example let us consider the term *ngaak* (+2). This term will include ego's and his wife's (or wives')⁵ grandparents, their siblings and cousins and their respective spouses together with the latter's own siblings and cousins, i.e. the parents* of every person whom ego might address using the terms for the preceding generation (+1).

Differentiation between kin and allies takes place only in ego's and the first ascendant's and descendant's generations, in which terms also become more diverse and specific. The following should therefore be noted:

Ego's generation (0) - Ego's siblings/cousins are all termed *anamaaku* (sing.:

⁴ In *Figure 2* I intentionally refrained from drawing complex sets of transverse and vertical lines conventionally used to indicate the multitude of relationships encompassed by each kinship term for I believe such a "descriptive" approach to kinship hinders our understanding of one of the most important features of this system: its classificatory nature. For the same reason I also avoided using common and widespread notations so often employed to describe the relationships comprised by the terms of a kinship system. In fact - as could be expected - Ruwund nomenclature emerges with overwhelming simplicity when terms are defined by reference to other classificatory terms within the system. So that the reader is not induced into converting terms in a descriptive sort of reading of the Ruwund nomenclature system, *Figure 2* is left basic in its indications.

⁵ Polygamous marriages are often practiced.

Figure 2: Ruwund Kinship and Alliance Terminology System¹

			generations
Δ / \bigcirc ngaakiriil			+4
Δ / \bigcirc taat'uku maaku			+3
Δ / \bigcirc ngaak			+2
<div> <div>kin:</div> <div> (Δ) mantu </div> <div> Δ / \bigcirc taat'uku maaku </div> </div>		<div> <div>allies:</div> <div> Δ / \bigcirc taat'uwen maawen </div> </div>	+1
<div> <div>kin / allies:</div> <div> $(\Delta / \bigcirc =)$ nkwed </div> <div> Δ / \bigcirc mwanamaaku (pl.:anamaaku) </div> </div>		<div> <div>allies / kin:</div> <div> Δ / \bigcirc nkwed </div> <div> $(= \Delta / \bigcirc)$ mwanamaaku </div> </div>	0
<div> <div>kin + allies:</div> <div> (Δ / \bigcirc) mwiiipu (pl.:iiipu) </div> <div> Δ / \bigcirc mwaan (pl.:aan) </div> <div>=</div> <div> Δ / \bigcirc taat'uwen maawen </div> </div>			-1
Δ / \bigcirc mwiijikur (pl.:iijikur)			-2
Δ / \bigcirc mwaan			-3
Δ / \bigcirc mwiijikuriii (pl.:iijikuriii)			-4

¹ All terms for which plural forms are not indicated follow the general rule and the plural is made by adding the prefix "a-" (e.g. *ataat'uku*, *amaaku*, etc.).

mwanamaaku), regardless of sex⁶, and their spouses* are referred to as *ankwed* (sing.: *nkwed*). A *mwanamaaku* of opposite sex, however, can also be called *mpaanyend* (pl.: *ampaanyend*). Ego's wife's siblings/cousins are *ankwed* and their spouses* are *anamaaku* (when ego is male the term *cirumakan*⁷ is used for male spouses and *mpaanyend* for female).

First ascendant generation (+1) - Ego's relatives and their spouses* are all designated by the terms *taat'uku* (for male, pl.: *ataat'uku*) and *maaku* (for female, pl.: *amaaku*), with the exception of all maternal *amaaku*'s *ampaanyend* (*amaaku*'s brothers/male cousins) for whom the term *mantu* (pl.: *amantu*) is used. Ego's wife's kindred is differentiated according to sex: *taat'uwen* (for male, pl.: *ataat'uwen*) and *maawen* (for female, pl.: *amaawen*).

First descendant generation (-1) - All holding a kinship relation with ego or his wife are designated by the term *mwaan* (pl.: *aan*), except, when ego is male, of those (male or female) addressed by the term *mwiipu* (pl.: *iipu*); the *ampaanyend* (sisters/female cousins)'s children⁸. Their spouses* are all termed *taat'uwen* (male) or *maawen* (female)⁹.

As we can see from the above description, the Ruwund nomenclature of kinship - like in so many other systems - can only be thought of on the basis of its classificatory

⁶ An age distinction can also be introduced: *yaay* (pl.: *ayaay*) or *mukurump* (pl.: *amakurump*) is an older sibling/cousin and *mwaan-kanc* (pl.: *aan-kanc*) a younger one.

⁷ Term also used to refer to a man's wife's lover or mistress's lover/husband. It is, consequently, a term used between men who share the same woman as a lover.

⁸ If ego is female, the terminology changes as follows: ego's husband is *nfumwend* and the term *mpaanyend* now refers to ego's male brother/cousin (*ampaanyend* being the *anamaaku* of opposite sex). The term *mwiipu* ceases to exist.

⁹ A parent* of a *taat'uwen* or *maawen* of the first descendant generation is called *nzad'nend*.

principle and, therefore, only by referring to other terms within the system can one kinship appellation be clearly and efficiently defined¹⁰. It is this very same classificatory feature which, when we transit from the kinship system to the perpetual ties linking holders of office titles, accounts for the fluidity of the institution of "perpetual kinship" whereby Ruwund high officials establish and argue relationships based on an idiom of "kin and allies". This institution allows for constant manipulation of ties which are somehow "negotiable" on the basis of the multiple possibilities offered by a system which is essentially classificatory in nature. It is along these lines that I propose to discuss perpetual kinship among Ruwund high dignitaries.

II

The Ruwund princess, the oral traditions recount, was given the title of *Nswaan Murund* by the first *Mwant Yaav*, Cibind Yirung's son. This is indeed the office title (*diijin da want*) by which this female dignitary is today most commonly addressed. although the Aruwund often refer to her by the mythical name of Ruwej (*diijin da kusambish*), thus emphasizing the feature of "time telescoping" characteristic of perpetual kinship.

As heiress of Ruwej, each *Nswaan Murund* is considered to be the perpetual "wife" (*mukajend*) of the *Mwant Yaav*, the successor of the hero-hunter, Cibind Yirung, who in the myth marries the native princess. Although this is a symbolic relationship between "office titles" and their incumbents do not actually cohabit (the sovereign has a few real wives, chosen by himself, who live in the royal palace), the Aruwund will view

¹⁰ Thus to describe, for instance, the "avuncular relationship" between ego and his *mantu*, which within Ruwund terminology can be concisely and fully defined as "the relation that ego maintains with a maternal *maaku's mpaanyend*", becomes a strenuous task outside the system's own terminology for it encompasses not only the relation between ego and his mother's brothers but also with his mother's male cousins and both the latter's wives' brothers and male cousins.

their mutual visits with tolerance and justify them with reference to their symbolic matrimonial status, thus stressing the identification of the titleholders with their mythical predecessors. On more than one occasion it was pointed out to me that this was only "natural" bearing in mind that, after all, they were spouses. In fact, while other female chiefs have a consort named *samwaan*¹¹, the *Nswaan Murund* herself cannot marry as the king is considered to be her *samwaan* and sole spouse. Despite this, the *Mwant Yaav* has still to reward the *Nswaan Murund* should she come to stay in his palace. Nowadays this is carried out as cash payment but in the past, according to the present incumbent, offerings of meat, goats, salt or other items were made and two slaves were designated to accompany Ruwej home after the visit becoming, thereafter, her own servants.

That the Aruwund think of the relationship between the *Nswaan Murund* and the *Mwant Yaav* as one of *alliance* is confirmed by their insistence in choosing the king and the *Nswaan Murund* from *independent* branches of the royal line of descent (cf. Hoover, 1978a:112,n.37;112). The symbolic relationship which the *Rukonkish*, as the successor of Kamong, maintains with the *Mwant Yaav* is, on the contrary, one between *kin* rather than allies. Thus, unlike the *Nswaan Murund*, she is "appointed by the king from among his immediate female kin" (*ibid.*:112-3; Byvang, 1937:429). Indeed, as "mother" (*maaku*) of the *Mwant Yaav*, the *Rukonkish* is engaged in the innovating order associated to Cibind Yirung and presided by the Ruwund king (cf. *supra*:70). Her dedication to the sovereign and the new royalty is continually stated through the demands of her office as an advisor to the *Mwant Yaav*. Furthermore, she maintains with the sovereign a close relationship of *filiation* which is, once again, a guarantee of such commitment.

¹¹ Except for the case of the *Nambaaz*, a female court dignitary considered *mpaanyend* of the *Mwant Yaav*, whose consort is designated *Sambaaz*.

The *Nswaan Murund*, on the other hand, is the representative of the ancestral order of the original chiefs who inhabit the lands of the Nkalaany River, the *atubung*. They are said to be *Nswaan Murund*'s *anamaaku* (siblings/cousins) or, more precisely, this dignitary's *ampaanyend* (male siblings/cousins) as, except for the *kabung* entitled *Kazamb*, they were originally all male. Indeed they represent those of Ruwej's *anamaaku* who did not abandon Ruwund lands in contrast to Cingud, Cinyam and Ndondj, the migrants who deserted the princess in their refusal to accept a foreigner as the new ruler. Being Ruwej's *ampaanyend*, the *atubung* are, consequently, the *Mwant Yaav*'s *ankwed* (in-law's of the same generation):

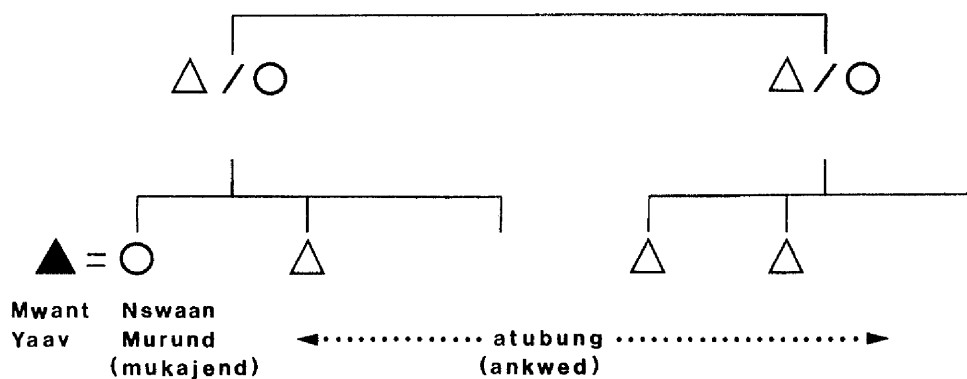


Figure 3

The *atubung*, however, are equally referred to as the *Mwant Yaav*'s *amantu*, a term which places them into the king's first ascendant generation. Inconsistencies of this sort

are frequent in perpetual kinship and can become a disturbing encounter in the field when one is left wondering: are the *atubung* the *Mwant Yaav*'s in-laws (*ankwed*), after all, or else his kinsmen (*amantu*)?

It is to this aspect of incongruity that Hoover refers when he writes: "... perpetual kinship ties among individual titles are not structured in a logical, coherent system. Each title has its own maze of relationships with its peers, ties which become contradictory when pursued as in a once popular American song: 'I Am My Own Grandpa'" (1978b:121). Indeed in the oral traditions the first *Mwant Yaav* (whom the present incumbent represents) was Cibind Yirung's son, called Yaav-a-Nawej in most accounts, and not the hunter himself. The title "*Mwant Yaav*", which can be translated as "chief Yaav", refers to this Yaav-a-Nawej who was the first to be called *Mwant* and therefore inaugurated the dynasty of the *Ant Yaav*. This does not invalidate the fact that the *Mwant Yaav* is also Cibind Yirung for, as his heir, Yaav is identified with his predecessor through positional succession. This explains why in Pogge's version (1880:224-6), unlike all others, it is Cibind Yirung himself who is named the founder of new kingship. What I am arguing (and Hoover implied?) is that unless we are willing to take into account the feature of "time telescoping" by which a successor participates in the identity and bonds created by his predecessors we may be forever trapped in the tangle of such disconcerting formula as "I am my own grandpa".

As we return to the ambivalence of the relationship between the king and the *atubung* - itself a result of the equally ambiguous tie which links the sovereign to the *Nswaan Murund* -, we now see it becomes intelligible. Indeed, if we consider the *Mwant Yaav* the representative of Cibind Yirung, the *Nswaan Murund* is seen as his "wife" and the *atubung*, her siblings/cousins (*ampaanyend*), are the king's in-laws (*ankwed*, cf. *Figure 3*); however, should we view the king as Yirung's son, Ruwej becomes his *maaku*. Even

in the accounts in which it is Kamong who bears the first king she is said to be Ruwej's *mwanamaaku* (sibling/cousin) and therefore, due to the classificatory feature of the kinship system, her child (*mwaan*) is also a *mwaan* of Ruwej (as siblings and cousins will address their children indiscriminately by the term *mwaan*). As shown in the *Figure 4* below, once Ruwej is considered in the *Mwant Yaav*'s parental generation the *Nswaan Murund*'s *ampaanyend* do indeed become the *Mwant Yaav*'s *amantu* and, therefore, his kinsmen.

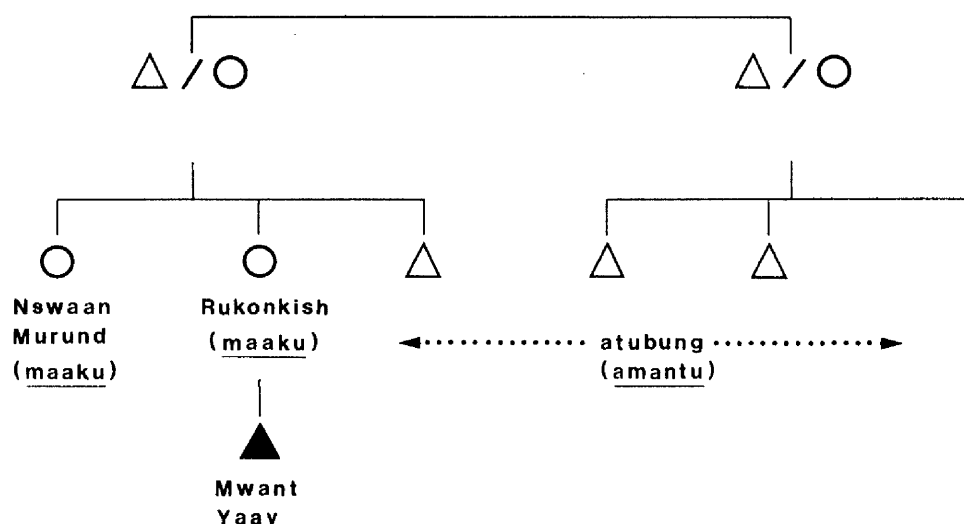


Figure 4

This and other ambiguities of perpetual kinship allow a wide scope for manoeuvring in tracing one's tie to the *Mwant Yaav* and his court, as well as in tracing ties among other dignitaries. The suppleness of the system, due largely to its classificatory nature, also accounts for what I have referred to in an earlier chapter as the "manipulation"

of perpetual kinship in minor traditions (*supra*:54). Classificatory terms used to define perpetual ties among dignitaries encompass a wide range of relationships and, therefore, the very same term can be claimed by some titleholders to stand for a close tie while others may interpret it as expressing more distant kindred. Title histories of a particular office will indeed invoke one or another of the possible threads and explore all sustainable ways of tracing a better genealogical link or of establishing a tie with a major court official. The system of perpetual kinship provides an inexhaustible repertoire of possibilities, allowing links to be claimed and positions to be bargained for.

Let us return to the *meaning* of such ambiguities as those underlying the ambivalent relationship which unites the *Mwant Yaav* to Ruwej (or her own representative at the royal court). The princess can be seen as both the king's *maaku* (mother/aunt) and his symbolic wife. Yet, notwithstanding the fact that Ruwej can be considered the *Mwant Yaav*'s *maaku* (and Dias de Carvalho's version of the tradition of state formation makes this a *biological* relationship) and that this link can be legitimately invoked for the purpose of tracing other dignitaries' relationship vis-a-vis the Ruwund king, the *Nswaan Murund* maintains a *symbolic* relation with the sovereign at his court which is, undoubtably, of *alliance* and not of motherhood (cf. *supra*:92-3). Similarly, despite the fact that the myth portrays Kamong as Yirung's second *wife*, this tie is not highlighted in the system of perpetual kinship. On what basis, then, does perpetual kinship play down certain ties in favour of other (considered more meaningful?) relationships?

The fact is that Kamong only becomes a "wife" in the myth as a result of Ruwej's sterility and in order to bear Yirung's child who would be the first *Mwant Yaav*. Her mythical role is, therefore, essentially that of "mother". Instead, it is Ruwej who, in the foundation of kingship, is thought of as Cibind Yirung's wife and *it is in this quality* that she unites the native authority and the alien rule in the rise of a new political order.

At this point, thus, it is the symbolic system which assists one in understanding the rationale underlying perpetual kinship ties among Ruwund dignitaries. By bringing together the *Nswaan Murund* and the *Mwant Yaav* as "spouses" the perpetual kinship relation institutes the *difference* on the grounds of which marriage rules are founded. Indeed the relationship which ties the *Nswaan Murund* to the Ruwund king, the representative and successor of Yirung, perpetuates the symbolic conjunction carried out by Ruwej between two *different* social orders. Kamong, on the other hand, reunites these by "giving birth" to the refined rule installed by her son, the first king (cf. *supra*:69).

The perpetual relationships which the *Rukonkish* and the *Nswaan Murund* establish with the *Mwant Yaav*, conveying their mythical roles in the foundation of kingship, are therefore of a substantially different nature. The *Nswaan Murund* engages in a relation of *affinity* founded upon *difference*; the tie which the *Rukonkish* maintains with the sovereign is, on the contrary, a *kinship* relation of proximity. The latter is no longer a relation between opposites but one of two who are *alike*.

In resorting to the symbolic framework for our understanding of Ruwund perpetual ties, one is inevitably faced with the question of whether or not perpetual kinship is, in fact, mainly about *kinship* relations. From the above discussion, which only for the sake of presentation did I focus on the three main mythical heroes, we can already conclude that perpetual kinship ties among Ruwund officials mean *symbolic* relationships. Up till now this point has been played down or entirely ignored in the literature on other peoples "making use" of perpetual kinship. In the light of the material presented here, I now suggest we examine this further.

In comparison to societies documented by other ethnographies we soon realize the particularity of the institution of perpetual kinship as it is practiced among the Ruwund

aristocracy. The first point to consider here should be that of descent. Both in the Luapula and Bemba cases, as well as among the Yao (Mitchell, 1956) or the Wambugwe of Tanzania studied by R.F.Gray (1953), we are dealing with societies which operate within a matrilineal rule of descent. Perpetual kinship in this particular environment plays an important role in maintaining links between matrilineages (cf. Cunnison, 1956:38-44) which, among the Eastern Lunda of the Luapula, have otherwise "no land-rights to defend, no ancestors to worship in common, no privileges to uphold" (*ibid.*:47). Further to this role, both Cunnison (*ibid.*:44-8) and Mitchell have asserted the *political* nature of perpetual kinship.

Since the Aruwund follow a bilateral rule of descent, the main role which Cunnison assigned for perpetual kinship in the Luapula Valley - that of joining or creating bonds between lineages - cannot be argued for this case. Here, more than the maintenance of enduring *kinship* relations between groups otherwise destined to disperse, the combined processes of "perpetual kinship" and "positional succession" appear responsible for the permanence of, above all, *symbolic* relationships. As Cunnison himself has noted (1956:38), most names acquired through perpetual kinship soon die out and those which ultimately prevail are of the most prominent figures such as founders of a lineage or the names inherited from oral traditions. I believe that it is the *symbolic strength* of such ties which, among the Aruwund, is responsible for the longevity of the names attached to the mythological system. And, it is due to the fact that the titles and positions perpetuated proceed from the symbolic realm that narrations move within a *timeless* world. The recounting of history ignores the passage of genealogical time for it is the timeless *symbolic* structure more than the eventual historical content of oral traditions which is central to the thought of the Ruwund peoples (cf. Palmeirim, 1989:550).

As for the "political argument" in explaining the institution of perpetual kinship,

I regard it to be far more pertinent in the case of the skillful steering of individual genealogies by candidates competing for an office (much in the way Richards describes, 1960) than in the actual definition of the office's *perpetual* standing in relation to the king and his court dignitaries. The latter is established by the mythological system and the implications of the various ways in which different oral narratives tackle perpetual kinship ties concern mainly the ranking of *symbolic* statuses.

The material discussed does not allow us to go as far as questioning the genealogical basis of perpetual kinship. This institution does indeed follow an idiom of kinship and is, overall, consistent with its terminology. But, among the "maze of relationships" - to borrow Hoover's words - which converge in one and the same perpetual position, some ties are given special emphasis and others are not according to the *symbolic meaning* which it is appropriate to disclose. Using an idiom of kinship, a logic of kin and allies, perpetual kinship ties create differences and proximities which work ultimately as *metaphors* for symbolic relationships. Thus, as argued before, the *alliance* relationship which links the *Nswaan Murund*, as heiress of Ruwej, to the *Mwant Yaav* can be seen to codify the antagonism of two *different* social orders which come together in the founding of Ruwund kingship. The logic of the *identical* which is conveyed by the relationship of *filiation* linking the *Mwant Yaav* to the *Rukonkish* stands, on the other hand, for the *conjunction* between these two worlds and declares Kamong fully engaged in the rise of the new order.

Returning now to the case of the *Mwant Yaav*, it is not, as Hoover puts it (1978b:121), that "the king ends up being his own father" (as a *relationship* cannot, by the very nature of the concept, be viewed in a reflexive manner). In fact, it is only in his relationship with the two highest court officials, the *Nswaan Murund* and the *Rukonkish*, that the ambiguous identity of the king can be seen to emerge. The simultaneous presence

of the two female nobles at the royal court is indeed the guarantee that both entities - that of son and that of Cibind Yirung himself - will be opportunely revealed. Each stresses a different but equally significant emphasis in Ruwund kingship rationale. The *Rukonkish*, being the *maaku* of the sovereign, declares him to be Yaav-a-Nawej thus asserting that kingship is an order *from within* and that therefore its founder is one fully recognized as a member of Ruwund culture. On the other hand, the *Nswaan Murund*, being his *wife*, reveals the *Mwant Yaav* to be the heir of Cibind Yirung and by this token emphasizes the dualistic and ambivalent nature of Ruwund sovereignty (as discussed in ch.II). Only by resorting to perpetual kinship, then, can the Aruwund assert one of the essences of their ideological understanding of kingship: that the king is *both* an alien and "one of us".

CHAPTER IV

WHERE DISTINCTIONS REMAIN UNSPOKEN

An essay on hierarchy

The terms "dignitaries" or "titleholders" used rather loosely up till now, conceal a highly differentiated range of prominent officials maintaining a set of hierarchical relationships which define the political organization of the Ruwund state. This chapter discusses some issues on hierarchy and the rationale underlying the political system presided over by the *Mwant Yaav*.

When talking of Ruwund dignitaries, the holders of perpetual titles, one should begin by distinguishing between "land trustees", the *anshir-a-ngand* (sing.: *nshir-a-ngand*), and the *ayilol* (sing.: *cilol*), who are administrative officers so to speak¹. The *anshir-a-ngand* are considered the original owners of the land (*ngand*) and represent the autochthonous population whose territory, according to oral tradition, came into the hands of alien conquerors. During the time of the Lunda empire, we are told, the *Mwant Yaav* would send chiefs (*ayilol*) to conquer lands and supervise territories recently incorporated into the state. Each *cilol* would settle in and oversee an area of land submitting its native owners to his² rule and that of the *Mwant Yaav*. The *cilol*'s duties included the collection of tribute to be sent to the capital, a share of which he would retain himself. Despite

¹ Except for the *Nswaan Murund* and the *atubung*, all titleholders referred to in previous chapters fall into the category of *ayilol*.

² To simplify the reading of the text I shall use masculine forms only although both *ayilol* and *anshir-a-ngand* include female as well as male titles.

continuing to recognize the native chiefs as the ancestral landholders, whom they referred to as *anshir-a-ngand* (lit.: "they to whom land was left")³, the *cilol* would then become a *mwant-a-ngand* ("chief of the land"), he who administered the affairs concerning that territory⁴. The whole Ruwund country became thus divided in domains or units of land (*mangand*, pl. of *ngand*) allocated to *ayilol*, each *cilol* being in charge of his own village and surrounding areas.

Most *ayilol* are "village headmen"⁵ nowadays and reside in the midst of their *mangand* whose affairs they control. They settle disputes among their own subjects (over land or of any other nature), announce the beginning of bush fires in the dry season, plan village activities and organize collective enterprises such as the construction of a building or the cleaning of common spaces. It is also the *cilol*'s task to collect funds on the king's request, announce news from the capital to the villagers and take before the sovereign, at the royal court, village affairs which may outreach his capacity.

At his investiture ceremony a new *cilol* is instructed on the limits of his estate. These are indicated by rivers and river sources whose names he will be expected to know as well as all aspects pertaining to his new domain. The lands (*mangand*) which a *cilol* supervises are divided in *ampat* (sing.: *mpat*), small extensions of uncultivated and vacant property (also delimited by rivers and sources) and each of these *ampat* is allocated to an office titleholder in the village (the headman himself included). The new chief must also retain the names of all these areas of bush belonging to his territory. Any game

³ From *kushill*, "to leave for" and *ngand*, "land/domain".

⁴ Hoover claims that "mwant-a-ngand" is merely another term for "nshir-a-ngand" (1978b:102-3) but I presume this to have been a misinterpretation on his part as it is the *cilol*, not the *nshir-a-ngand*, that the Aruwund consider to be the *mwant-a-ngand*.

⁵ With the exception of the *ayilol* who live at the king's court (where the *Mwant Yaav* himself is the great chief) and a few residing in regional courts of major dignitaries.

caught in these areas belongs to the hunter and the *mpat*'s owner who must, nonetheless, make an offering of some prescribed parts of the animal to the respective *cilol*. Even the *anshir-a-ngand*, the original land owners, have to comply by this prescription and present certain parts of the game to the village chief, the *cilol* who supervises the land.

Despite the *ayilol*'s political and administrative authority, the *anshir-a-ngand* retain their ritual rights over land. They represent the *local* population and the indigenous proprietors of a certain estate in much the same way as the *atubung* of Nkalaany represent the main ancient owners of the overall Ruwund country. The *Nswaan Murund* and the *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* are thus major *anshir-a-ngand* and it is in this capacity that the latter are the ritual investors of the sovereign. Similarly, it is the land trustees of a domain who invest their respective *cilol* with the power of his office. By virtue of this act those among the ancestral landholders and their descendants who perform such ritual duties are also called *atubung*. A *cilol* may have one or numerous *atubung* of his own depending on a variety of contingencies and also the extension of land under his direct jurisdiction. Hence the Aruwund will speak of the *atubung* of the *cilol* entitled *Mukaciland* (*atubung-a-Mukaciland*) in much the same manner as they refer to the *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* (*atubung-a-Mwant Yaav*). Certain informants, however, make a linguistic distinction between the *atubung* of the king and the investors of a *cilol* whom they call *atushiiw* (sing: *kashiiw*)⁶. Both representing the autochthonous population, the "great *atubung*"⁷ are Ruwej's close relatives, her own siblings and cousins (*anamaaku*), whereas the *atushiiw* are said to be Ruwej's and the major *atubung*'s descendants (the Aruwund

⁶ Hoover considers this to be a term particularly in usage in the central area, between the Lulua and the Nkalaany rivers (cf. 1978b:103,n.35).

⁷ In some parts of the text I shall use "great *atubung*" or "major *atubung*" to differentiate the king's *atubung* from those of a *cilol*. Everywhere else throughout this or other chapters, unless otherwise indicated, the term "*atubung*" is employed to refer *specifically* to the investors of the Ruwund king inhabiting the lands of the Nkalaany River. This is how the Aruwund commonly use the term.

described them as *aan-a-Ruwej*).

As part of the ancestral order of Ruwej which they represent within the organization of the *Mwant Yaav*'s state, the *atubung* (both the king's and a *cilol*'s) do not engage in political or administrative affairs. Their functions, as *anshir-a-ngand*, are essentially ritual. The daily life of a *kabung* of a *cilol*, thus, resembles very closely that of a common villager, except for the infrequent occasions when he is called upon to perform his duties at a chief's installation ceremony or in a few other ritual events. The minor *atubung* inhabit their respective *cilol*'s village and rely on his judgement as the legitimate holder of political power in charge of overseeing the settlement and its domains. Only in this respect can they be viewed as his subjects for they are considered of same status and rank and are allowed to salute the *cilol* as equals, that is, with the greetings used between commoners⁸. They maintain the same sort of relationship with the village chief as that which links the great *atubung* and the *Nswaan Murund* to the sovereign (cf. *supra*:71-2). Hence the organization in Ruwund villages exhibits the same dichotomic understanding which structures the ideology of kingship at the capital. Indeed it would not be contrary to Ruwund thought should these correspondances be formulated as follows:

atubung of a *cilol* : *cilol* :: the *Nswaan Murund* + the great *atubung* : *Mwant Yaav*
+ *ayilol* :: autochthonous power of Ruwej : foreign rule of Cibind Yirung

⁸ When a commoner is to greet a bypasser who is not a titleholder he/she will address him/her with *walankaany*! (early to mid-morning) or *wajingaany*! (late morning till evening) or, alternatively, with *moyaany*!, a greeting used any time of the day (the suffix *-aany* can be dropped if addressing a youngster or one with whom the speaker is on very familiar terms). Respect and deference on the basis of seniority and/or unfamiliarity can be expressed by adding the term *mwaan* after the greeting. The addressee should reply with a correspondent answer (*mwaaniye mwaan avude* to return politeness or simply *mwaaniye*, in more familiar greetings) should he acknowledge in the speaker an equal status. A commoner should, however, address a chief or noble by the formula (*a)vude-vude (mwaan)* (often extended to elders) accompanied by hand-clapping and, in the case of males and to increase the degree of respect, by a gesture of kneeling (women are expected to do so towards female dignitaries only). A greeting of *vude-vude* should be answered in the same manner in order to leave interlocutors in completely equal standing. It is therefore not inappropriate for a chief to affirm his superior status by replying with a form conveying a lesser degree of politeness.

But the *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* do not inhabit the royal village. They have their own settlements in the lands between the rivers Nkalaany and Kajidij, believed to be the cradle of Ruwund country. Also in this case all technicalities of power are left to the *Mwant Yaav* whose task is, so to speak, that of a great *cilol* in that he is the one in charge of all administrative and political affairs affecting the state in general. The Aruwund explained that the *Mwant Yaav*, not unlike the village *ayilol*, is a *mwiin kwiyyikel* ("he who governs") of the entire Ruwund country whose ancestral owners are the *Nswaan Murund* and the great *atubung* of the Nkalaany. These, as major *anshir-a-ngand*, perform ritual functions at the king's investiture and are called to the court once or twice a year to participate with great pomp and ritual in the *Mwant Yaav*'s public meeting, the royal *citentam*. Otherwise they live quietly away at the Nkalaany where each is the headman of a village in much the same way as the *ayilol* are chiefs of their own settlements.

The great *atubung* travel to Musumb, the royal court and capital of the kingdom, only by invitation of the sovereign (via *Nswaan Murund*). Their official visits represent great expense to the king who is expected to receive them in state and make generous offerings. Indeed the particular status of the *atubung* is demarcated from that of the remaining chiefs and nobles of the king (the *ayilol*) who owe the sovereign a regular payment of tribute.

The arrival of the great *atubung* at the royal court on the occasion of a major *citentam* is a moment of great commotion. Coming from the lands of the Nkalaany, their approach to Musumb is preceded by announcing cries. The population hastens to conceal all agricultural products, game or livestock which the *atubung* would not hesitate to grab as they pass by. Similarly, their visits to the market during the stay at the court are greeted by general pandemonium. The *atubung* of Nkalaany seize all produce they believe necessary for their own subsistence and that of their sister/cousin (*mwanamaaku*), Ruwej,

in this way proclaiming themselves the original and legitimate land owners (*anshir-ngand*).

Being heirs of the local ancestors and representing the assimilated population together with the *Nswaan Murund*, the major *atubung* display an antagonism in relation to the *Mwant Yaav* which is a corollary of the opposition in the myth between the rule of Ruwej and that of Cibind Yirung. The salutation system which, among the Aruwund, asserts and codifies hierarchical relationships brings into evidence the hostility linking, at the symbolic level, the *atubung* to the *Mwant Yaav*. Hence, whenever the great assembly occurs, all *ayilol* pay homage to the king by clapping their hands (v.: *kwiifukwiil*) followed by the verbal greeting "karombu!"⁹, in this way expressing their respect and deference to the *Mwant Yaav* (cf. *infra*:150). The *atubung*, however, greet the king *as equals* with the verbal salutation used between commoners or chiefs of equal rank¹⁰, at the same time as they rub their hands in a circular movement¹¹, a greeting which is an *exclusive* privilege of the *atubung*¹². These chiefs maintain in fact a joking relationship with the *Mwant Yaav* which gives them the right to refer publicly to the sovereign in a depreciative and less flattering manner. Despite the nature of this relationship with the great *atubung*, the king is, nevertheless, obliged to summon them regularly to Musumb

⁹ Or "vude vude taat'uku!" for female dignitaries. To both greetings the king replies with the expression "yow amboku!".

¹⁰ Or else using the verbal expression "twalangwiish ngand!" ("we salute the kingdom!") to which the king answers with "wendaany mwaan!" ("welcome!") also rubbing his hands in a circular movement.

¹¹ This is also the way in which minor *atubung* salute their own *cilol* (as well as other *ayilol* of equal status).

¹² Only the *cilol Mukaciland* is also permitted such gestural greeting as he is the *ngaak* (grandfather/ancestor) of the *Mwant Yaav* (being *Rukonkish's* *taat'uku*, father/paternal uncle) and, according to oral traditions, a senior among Ruwej's *anamaaku* (brothers/cousins), the relatives of the princess who would become *atubung*. The *Mukaciland* should, however, utter "karombu!" as do other *ayilol*. His status is thus rather ambivalent being one of the main ancestral chiefs from the Ruwund heartland (some claim that he was formerly the senior *kabung*) who, nonetheless, became a *cilol*.

as if this antagonism had to be periodically re-enacted in public assembly and in the presence of all the Ruwund population.

The great *atubung* are set outside of the elaborate hierarchy within which the *ayilol* operate. Apart from the differentiation resulting from the importance of their respective roles in the king's investiture, all *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* are considered of equal status and, as Ruwej's *anamaaku* (siblings/cousins), they recognize the supremacy of the *Nswaan Murund*¹³. All attempts on my part to discern hierarchical relationships among them were inevitably discouraged and, despite some sort of seniority being acknowledged to the *kabung* entitled *Mukarusong*, the *atubung* were adamant that no status inequality existed among them. The *Mukarusong*'s seniority is seen merely as a consequence of his title history and is mainly due to the prominence of the ritual task he performs in the royal installation (cf. *infra*:179). But, regardless of this, he does not benefit from any special prerogatives in comparison to other *atubung*. This *homogeneity* among the *atubung*, as well as their very particular place within the organization of the Ruwund system, is also codified in their salutations. Unlike all other dignitaries, the *atubung* greet each other "shaking"¹⁴ their *left* hands. They may also salute one another in the gestural manner in which they greet the sovereign and uttering "twalangwiish ngand!" ("we salute the kingdom/land!") for, like the king, they are legitimate owners of the Ruwund land. Again, this is the greeting addressed by the great *atubung* to the *Nswaan Murund*.

The *atubung* of *ayilol* (*atushiw*) are also considered "equals". The fact that their ritual role is of lesser magnitude and their relationship to Ruwej more remote does not

¹³ Indeed, while the *Mwant Yaav* can replace an incumbent of an office of *cilol* who has proven unsuitable, the *atubung* of the *Nkalaany* can only be dismissed by the other fellow *atubung* and only after having obtained the approval of the *Nswaan Murund*.

¹⁴ In a lateral, not an up-downward, movement.

make them hierarchically inferior to the great *atubung*. They are perceived as "minor *atubung*" and considered less important because the chiefs they install are subordinate to the king. Nevertheless, they are entitled to salute the major *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* from an equal standing.

Among the *ayilol*, however, hierarchical levels can be recognized. Although the Aruwund do not subdivide the category "ayilol" into other smaller or more restricted groups of nobles, some chiefs have a number of lesser *ayilol* who are subordinated to them. This is a prerogative of the *ayilol* who, at the times of the Lunda empire, conquered territories belonging to other chiefs or were attributed them by the king himself. The Aruwund may acknowledge these hierarchical differences by saying that those of higher rank are "big/senior *ayilol*" (*ayilol ajim/amakurump*) while their subordinate chiefs are "small/junior *ayilol*" (*ayilol akemp/aan-kanc*).

Minor *ayilol* are in charge of overseeing the estate of their senior *cilol* who may live at the king's court or have their own court in a settlement elsewhere in the country. They are village headmen in the areas where they reside but their lands belong ultimately to the *cilol* from whom they depend and to whom they pay tribute in cash, livestock or produce. The *Rukonkish*, the *cilol* said to have the greatest number of territories (*mangand*), has around 70-80 subordinate chiefs dispersed in numerous villages in the zones of Kapanga, Sandoa and Dilolo in Zaïre and also in Zambia. When going to Musumb these subordinate chiefs display their inferior rank by taking a lower seat in her presence. In their villages, however, these chiefs have their own court of sub-nobles, known as *anvubu* (who also hold perpetual titles). These assist the *cilol* in carrying out his tasks as village leader. High officials who claim superiority over other *ayilol* inhabiting outlying areas can also have a number of *anvubu* who help them at their own courts. This is not, however, a general rule and many senior *ayilol* at Musumb or those who are

assisted at their own villages by some of their subordinate *ayilol* do not have *anvubu*. There are also many cases of independent *ayilol* who neither have minor *ayilol* of their own nor are they subordinated to another higher dignitary.

All nuances of these hierarchical relationships among *ayilol* are conveyed in the greetings appropriate for each occasion. While *ayilol* of equal status greet each other as commoners would, a lesser *cilol* addresses a senior chief by uttering "karombu!" and clapping his hands. Additionally, he is compelled to lie on the ground in a display of submission (v.: *kubumburik*). This is the greeting he should perform before his superior *cilol*, as well as in the presence of all other *ayilol* of the same rank. A big *cilol* acknowledges this ritual salutation with a hand wave (v.: *kubengish*), in the same way that the sovereign responds to the greetings of the *ayilol*.

With the exception of the area where the great *atubung* reside, Ruwund villages are, as mentioned, ruled by *ayilol* who are either independent or subordinated to some major *cilol* living at Musumb or in his own larger settlement. Each *cilol* has his personal court with a body of dignitaries which include *anvubu* (as well as, in certain larger courts, some of the dependent *ayilol*) and *atubung* (*atushiiw*) who are the chief's ritual investors and the ancestral trustees of the territory under his supervision. Only the villages of the *Mwant Yaav's atubung* in the Nkalaany River area display a different composition thus reaffirming their antagonism and alienation from the political system thought to be associated with the founding of the new state. The great *atubung* do not have any subordinate dignitaries and they invest one another with the ritual power of their office. Also, while the village of a *cilol* has a heterogeneous population, that of a *kabung* is inhabited by his kindred alone¹⁵. Hence the inhabitants of a *kabung's* village are not his

¹⁵ In older times this was more strictly so. Today, however, people tends to mingle due to a number of circumstances. At the time of my fieldwork some of the *atubung* had seen the population of their

subjects as such but relatives who follow his advice not as that of a "political" chief but as the "senior" and most respected member of a kinship group.

II

In Ruwund daily life, as in so many other contexts and languages, greetings are a means of bringing strangers closer or setting them apart, increasing or minimizing age differences or conveying different degrees of deference or familiarity. As the previous pages have shown, among titleholders they are a means of asserting positions and ranking. Indeed, status and hierarchical relationships exist *only* in so far as they are codified, re-established as well as constantly *re-created* at certain moments and by certain codes of social life. The salutation system is one such means of expressing relations and the use of power insignia - which I shall analyse next - is another, particularly when observed at the royal court which, being the capital of the *new* political organization headed by the *Mwant Yaav*, provides a privileged site to affirm rank in a more elaborate and visual manner.

All male *ayilol* residing in Musumb or elsewhere are entitled to wear, as their basic ceremonial garment, a mid-calf length skirt in material of industrial manufacture with a wide lower border of contrasting cloth (*mukambu*). The textile is gathered around the waist or tucked in pleats at the front under a belt. Female *ayilol* put on a wrap-around

villages dwindle. A striking example was the village of the *kabung* entitled *Sakalend* who resided alone with her daughter. As a result of this some *atubung* had moved with their remaining kindred into the village of a *cilol*. In Ciland, the village of the *cilol Mukaciland*, for instance, two of the *Mwant Yaav*'s *atubung* resided there. Others gathered in a single settlement, to which the Aruwund referred generically as *kwa atubung* ("at the *atubung*'s place"), each being in charge of the affairs of his respective kin. Some, however, still remained in their own independent villages.

"Kindred" is here understood in its widest sense and includes both the kin of the present holder of the specific title of *kabung* and those of all previous incumbents of that very same office.

cloth instead, like any common woman. In addition, *ayilol* wear bracelets and sometimes anklets, called *jinsambu* (sing.: *nsambu*), which consist of fine wire wound around a fiber core. Should the right to the office be traced to the paternal side, the *jinsambu* are worn on the *right* arm; when the title is inherited via the maternal line of descent, the bracelets are displayed on the *left* arm. Similarly, should a dignitary prove his right to a title through the paternal as well as maternal side, he should wear them on both arms¹⁶. Commonly, *ayilol* also hold a flywhisk (*mwimpung*) which they wave when performing the rhythmic march (v.: *kunanik*) at the major public audiences.

To this basic attire other symbols of office can be added and these convey not only differences in rank but have also to do with incidents relating to a dignitary's title history. Several major *ayilol*, for instance, wear the skin of a serval (*nzwijj*) hanging from the waist on top of the chief's skirt. These are skins which the new incumbent of a title receives from his predecessors and which he should display whenever in official dress. Furthermore, some *ayilol* who were war leaders or executioners at the time of the Lunda empire have an additional emblem of power which is a kind of sword (or dagger) called *mpak ya mukwaal* (cf. *Photograph 5*), and a few major *ayilol* originating from the Nkalaany area are entitled to a *rukan*, the symbol of autochthony. Indeed, it is said by oral tradition that when Ruwej gave the *rukan* of her ancestors to Cibind Yirung identical bracelets were made to be given to chiefs originally from the Ruwund heartland (the *atubung* in particular), thus emphasizing their native origin (cf. Carvalho, 1886:664).

Finally, numerous *ayilol* at Musumb or in important outlying villages have a right to a crown. These are made of beads and differ in type according to the status they are intended to convey. The simplest and that of lowest rank, used by lesser *ayilol* of the

¹⁶ On the ankles this right versus left opposition does not seem to apply.

Mwant Yaav, consists of a beaded band (*kabond*) worn around the forehead. This band forms part of other more elaborate crowns. The *yiibangul ya yaapu ya makond* is the most common and that used by a considerable number of *ayilol* (cf. *Photographs 2 and 7*). It has five beaded bands which stand up on the head and is named after its shape which recalls a hand of bananas (*caapu ca makond*). Most major male and female *ayilol* at Musumb wear this type of crown although it is claimed that, in older times, it was strictly an insignia of female nobles. *Twimpaay*, a headdress with three beaded protuberances resembling little baskets (*cimpaay*, "basket"), was then exclusively worn by male dignitaries (by the *ayilol* considered *aan-a-Mwant Yaav*, "children of the *Mwant Yaav*").

The sovereign may use the *yiibangul ya yaapu ya makond*¹⁷ for more informal meetings but in major audiences or on other important official occasions he wears a crown called *ubaw*. On the latter the bands constituting the *yiibangul* are linked with beaded loops which terminate at the sides as buffalo horns (the name of this crown derives from *mbaw*, "buffalo"). A tuft of red feathers of the bird *kalong* (African grey parrot, cf. Hoover, 1976) is placed on top.

All of these symbols of power can only be understood in relation to one another. Hence, whenever the *Mwant Yaav* places the sacred bracelet on his wrist (the ultimate symbol of power) he is obliged to wear the *ubaw*, the crown of highest status and exclusive to the king¹⁸. A sovereign who has not yet been installed by the *atubung* at the Nkalaany area is only entitled to the *yiibangul* of his predecessor. Only after his full enthronement is a new *Mwant Yaav* given his *ubaw*, the previous sovereign having been

¹⁷ The term *yiibangul* on its own was employed on a few occasions as a generic term to refer to any kind of crown. However, it is most often understood in a stricter sense to designate the *yiibangul ya yaapu ya makond* specifically and some informants indeed disclaimed any other use of the word. It is in this latter sense that I shall use the term throughout the text.

¹⁸ One other headdress, named *win muriny*, is also said to have been worn by the king in the past (cf. also Hoover, 1978b:557).



Photograph 2: The Mutiy wearing the insignia of a cilol (with the mukambu, yiibangul ya yaapu ya makond, mpak ya mukwaal, jinsambu and mwimpung).

buried with his own.

Through their distinct features and corresponding hierarchical categorization all of these crowns convey differences in rank among the dignitaries who wear them. However, it is not only the nature of the regalia which codifies or serves as a means of asserting rank and status. Hierarchy is, by definition, a mechanism of affirming a *relative* positioning hence *when*, *where* and, particularly, *in front of whom* insignia are used expresses far more significantly differences and cleavages. In fact, the regalia of the *ayilol* do not have an absolute nature and a noble cannot always be said to hold an unreserved right to wear a crown. In some (although rare) cases a *cilol* who displays a crown during the king's public meetings or else in the presence of certain dignitaries may be expected to refrain from doing so in a different circumstance or before certain other nobles. Chiefly regalia are thus to be used or omitted according to the hierarchical position which is to be asserted, acknowledged, or else achieved. To put on a crown is to gain and to claim status, to refrain from it is to recognize the opponent's higher rank.

Thus, as with salutations, the use of insignia allows for a degree of flexibility in acquiring and *negotiating* status and hierarchical positions. When interviewing court officials at Musumb I was told more than once about the case of the *Nakambaaj*, nowadays a *cilol*, to whom a recent *Mwant Yaav* conferred the right to a crown (*yiibangul ya yaapu ya makond*). Originally, the *Nakambaaj* was a servant (*mwiilomb*) of the *Rukonkish* and, therefore, far inferior to her rankwise. By acquiring the right to wear a crown in public audience she clearly raised her status. The *Rukonkish* took this as a degradation of her own status even though the *Nakambaaj*'s lesser position is still codified by the fact that she is to sit in the king's audience on an antelope skin (*ncil*) whereas other high female nobles are entitled to the skin of a leopard. However, despite having gained a "public" closeness to the rank of other major female officials at the court, she is not

entitled to wear a crown in the presence of the *Rukonkish* before whom she is compelled to sit on the ground.

The skins on which the *ayilol* sit in the *citentam* or in the presence of each other and the relative heights of their seats are indeed one other means of codifying or "manipulating" rank. When a major meeting takes place in the courtyard facing the king's palace all *ayilol* sit on the skin of a *ncil* with the exception of the five major female nobles living at Musumb who have a right to a leopard skin¹⁹. Commoners stand on the sidelines and the king's wives, holding a very minor status within Ruwund hierarchy, sit on woven mats (*yikang*, sing.: *cikang*).

As with the use of crowns, these seating "heights" are not absolute. *Ayilol* who sit on antelope skins in the public audience might sit at different heights when visiting one another. "Levels" have therefore to be considered when talking of the hierarchical system among the *ayilol*. At one level, namely when in presence of the king and the Ruwund population during a public meeting, differences in rank are attenuated or minimized to give due emphasis to the hierarchical supremacy of the sovereign. However, at a lower level finer and more subtle cleavages are enhanced and additional hierarchical relationships revealed. The case of the *anvubu* illustrates this point for, despite the fact that they are given special prerogatives when sitting at a *citentam* in their *cilol*'s village, they are not recognized as dignitaries in the royal court and are, therefore, not allowed to sit on a skin at the king's public audience.

But insignia are also part of the same dualistic symbolic framework which defines Ruwund ideology of kingship. Indeed, the regalia used by the *ayilol* are clearly associated to the *new* political rule of Cibind Yirung while those of the *atubung* exhibit elements

¹⁹ With the additional exception of the chief *Mukakatot*, a *cilol* from Musumb who is originally from the Nkalaany area and who sits on the skin of a hyena (*cimung*).

which recall the *old* order of Ruwej. Hoover explains, for instance, that the beaded crowns of both the king and *ayilol* imitate the hairstyle which was worn by the Luba hunter according to oral tradition (1978b:557). Also, some of these dignitaries are entitled to a sword (*mpak ya mukwaal*) which is again an emblem claimed to have been brought to Ruwund country by Cibind Yirung. This being so, the *ayilol*'s regalia closely resemble those of the sovereign himself who is, after all, the heir of the Luba mythical hero.

In his complete ceremonial attire during an audience of great importance the king wears the chiefly skirt with the skin of a serval on top, wire bracelets on his wrists and ankles, a crown, the sword, and the ultimate emblem of royalty, the sacred bracelet of human sinew, called *rukan*²⁰, which Ruwej received from her father and entrusted to Cibind Yirung. He sits on a throne placed on top of a leopard and a lion skin and is protected by a parasol. The symbols of power of both the sovereign and the *ayilol*, hence, do belong to one and the same system of regalia and the insignia of the latter can indeed be viewed as a mere replica of the king's emblems while denoting an unquestionable drop in status. The sovereign, on the other hand, can be said to dress as a "great *cilol*".

In contrast to the *ayilol*, the *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* wear ceremonial garments of a completely different nature, in this case involving elements associated with the pre-existing social order of Nkond and of his daughter, Ruwej (cf. *Photographs 3 and 4*). Nowadays their official dress consists of a white t-shirt (*tariko* or *tadiko*²¹) with a piece of white muslin cloth (*malakaany*²²) wrapped around as a skirt and held by a belt on top of which may hang the skin of a serval. A white feather of the bird *kanandj* is placed in the hair which recalls the name of the first village founded by Ruwej and her people as

²⁰ Less commonly referred to as *kazeekil*.

²¹ Probably from the French word "tricot".

²² From the French word "américain" (cf. Hoover, 1976).



Photograph 3: The Mukarusong wearing the insignia of a kabung (with the tariko, the kasal katok, a civet's skin over the shoulder and on the ground, the mukombu, a skin of a serval on the lap and the cimpiding; also a small calabash to drink palm wine from called copu).



Photograph 4: A kabung (entitled Mwant Kayombu) wearing the rukan.

they came out from the original cave into the daylight (cf. *supra*:35). The village was called Kasal Katok which means both "to be light" and "little white feather". In addition, the great *atubung* carry a wooden walking-stick (*mukombu*) for, as representatives of the ancestors (*angaak*) of the Aruwund, they are seen as aged people. They are the *ancient* chiefs of the Nkalaany, the cradle of Ruwund country. As they embody the values of autochthony and ancestry in Ruwund kingship ideology, the *atubung* have their own bracelets of human sinew (*nkan*, sing.: *rukan*), each kept inside a small basket with a lid (*cimpiding*) carried over the shoulder, which they are entitled to wear being the original owners of the sovereign's *rukan*, the symbol of autochthony inherited from the Ruwund ancestors. Finally, to complete the *atubung*'s paraphernalia, a skin of a civet (*cikaay*), or in some cases of a serval (*nzwuij*), is carried over the shoulder and used for sitting on²³.

It becomes clear from the above that the insignia of the great *atubung* refer not to a *political* order but to their role as ritual specialists. White is indeed the colour conveying ritual purity, their role being that of investors at the king's enthronement ceremony. Also, contrarily to the *ayilol*'s emblems of power which, as a means of conveying rank, are "put on and taken off" and their usage *relative* to one's opponent, the regalia of the *atubung* are the same for all of them and have some kind of *absolute* value which complies with their aversion to hierarchy.

Despite the fact that the symbols of office of the *ayilol* and *atubung* appear to constitute *exclusive* categories of insignia, the system allows for some "hybrid" cases which reveal a considerably more complex reality. The old and new order which are often seen as *antagonic* principles partake of each other's essence and are constantly engaged

²³ Minor *atubung*, the investors of a *cilol*, also dress in white and use these very same insignia of office on ritual occasions with the sole exception of the white feather which identifies the great *atubung* as the relatives of Ruwej who inhabited Kasal Katok, the princess's village. Also, the *atubung* of a *cilol* who does not possess a *rukan* may not have *nkan* themselves.

in an interaction which imbues the system with great ambivalence and overall complexity (as discussed at length in ch.II, cf. *supra*:79). This ambiguity of Ruwund kingship ideology is once more expressed in the regalia of high office. For example, it is not only the *atubung* and Ruwej who have the right to a *rukan*, the bracelet which is the symbol of autochthony *par excellence*, but also some *ayilol* who, paradoxically, are perceived by the Aruwund as the officials of the *new* state founded by the *Mwant Yaav*. This is, however, restricted to the *ayilol* who, like the king himself (being the son of a native woman), are originally from the Nkalaany, the primitive land of the Aruwund. Hence, in the royal court, apart from the sovereign and the *Nswaan Murund*, heiress of Ruwej, a few other *ayilol* such as the *Sakawaat Nkwaany* (the senior of the *iin mazemb* who represent the people of Ruwej in Musumb) and the *Rukonkish*, for instance, have the right to wear a bracelet of human sinew. Although *ayilol*, they perpetuate titles originally from the Nkalaany and are thus considered autochthonous chiefs²⁴. In outlying villages there are several *ayilol* who also have a *rukan*.

This ambivalent nature of the Ruwund ideology of kingship - so clearly revealed in Ruwej's (ambiguous) behaviour in the foundation myth (cf. *supra*:68-9) - is also magnificently conveyed in the paraphernalia which the *Nswaan Murund*, heiress to the princess, exhibits on ritual occasions.

As the eldest sister/cousin (*mwanaamaaku*) of the *atubung*, Ruwej is the ultimate representative of the autochthonous and ancestral authority and, as such, she is praised as "a very elderly woman, a woman who walks with a walking-stick" (*kashin-a-kaj*²⁵, *mband wendina pa mukombu*). Thus, like the *atubung*, the *Nswaan Murund* carries the

²⁴ It is also claimed that there were a few cases in which a *Mwant Yaav* presented a *cilol* with a *rukan* because he wanted to praise his achievements (in war, for instance).

²⁵ The term *kashin-a-kaj* does not merely mean "an old woman" (what the Aruwund would refer to as *iipal*). It refers to an *extremely* old and feeble woman, one who already has difficulties in walking.

mukombu as symbol of her ancestral power.

Other regalia which associate the *Nswaan Murund* with the original order at the Nkalaany are the *rukan* (kept in a small basket, the *cimpiding*, like in the case of the *atubung*) and the white feather (*kasal katok*) placed on the head²⁶. The latter, however, is only worn at the king's investiture at the Nkalaany River and on a few other ritual occasions when the *Nswaan Murund* also dresses in white muslin cloth (*malakaany*).

Both a representative of the autochthonous order and the king's symbolic wife, the *Nswaan Murund*, however, also holds insignia associated with the new political system. In Musumb, at the royal meetings in the public courtyard, the *Nswaan Murund* dresses as a female *cilol*, that is with a coloured cloth, her crown (*yiibangul ya yaapu ya makond*) and the wire bracelets and anklets (*jinsambu*). She thereby displays her affiliation to the *Mwant Yaav*'s order in whose emergence she was fully engaged. Yet, as pointed out earlier on, insignia does not have an absolute character and circumstances may call for a change of display. Thus when the *Mwant Yaav* is away from Musumb, for example, the *Nswaan Murund* must no longer behave like a *cilol* as she would then be seen as claiming for herself the place of senior chief of the Aruwund. Instead, she puts on the *malakaany* and, pouring palm wine (*maruvu ma ntomb*) over her *rukan*, evokes the Ruwund ancestors, pleading for their protection of the *Mwant Yaav* while on his journey.

III

In the light of the above, Ruwund society may be seen as embodying *both* a hierarchical and an egalitarian ideology. The rationale according to which the *atubung*, as the original land-trustees, are organized tends towards minimizing differences in status.

²⁶ One of the praise-names of Ruwej is "Nakasal Katok", meaning "she of Kasal Katok", "one of Kasal Katok origin".

The "logic" uniting them is one of *sameness* as opposed to the fine gradation which affects the *ayilol*. Descendants of the Ruwund ancestors (cf. *infra*:175), the *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* are, by definition, *kinsmen*, as are also all the inhabitants of the villages they superintend (cf. *supra*:110). They share the same insignia, salute each other indiscriminately and are reluctant to acknowledge seniorities beyond the mere differences of genealogy or of their roles as ritual specialists. All these principles are subverted in the case of the *ayilol*, the officials who maintain and constitute the political apparatus of the state, perceived as the *new* order founded by the *Mwant Yaav*.

The realization of these two contradictory trends in the Ruwund social system brings into question certain acknowledged ideas on hierarchy. Data of this type have indeed been used to discuss Louis Dumont's theory when he equates modern societies with *individualism and egalitarianism* as opposed to the *hierarchical and holistic* ideology of "traditional" societies (cf. Dumont, 1979[1966]:23; 1977:3-4)²⁷. S. Howell (1985), for instance, argues that in the case of the Chewong of Malaysia, a society that could be broadly defined as "traditional", equality, rather than hierarchy, is the dominant ideological value. Similarly, J. Parry points to equality as a principle stressed in the caste system in Kangra. As for the case of the Aruwund, egalitarianism and hierarchy appear to be reconciled in one and the same ideological construct²⁸.

Howell's case study is presented in a collection of papers resulting from a

²⁷ In *Homo Hierarchicus* Dumont does not specify what we are to understand as "traditional societies" in his work. In later writings he seems to use this expression in a strict sense, to refer to "higher civilizations" (1978:94). However, subsequent studies which he himself sanctioned (the works of the ERASME team and Tcherkezoff's, for instance, cf. *infra*:124) have legitimized a broader reading of the term.

²⁸ For the purpose of the following discussion, the term "ideology" is used in the strict sense enunciated by Louis Dumont as the set of ideas, values and "representations" of a society in general (1979:15-6,n.1a). Dumont stresses that this concept should be understood here as the ideology of a society as a whole (*l'idéologie globale*) and not in its special use as the ideology of a social class.

conference held in Oxford in 1983 in which British and French anthropologists re-evaluate L. Dumont's theories on hierarchy and hierarchical opposition in contexts other than the Hindu caste system (ranging from Melanesia to Southeast Asia, Nepal and Africa). The grounds for comparing Dumont's ideas of "hierarchy", a principle primarily formulated to account for the particularities of Hindu society, with other ethnographies are by and large legitimized by this author's claim that his theory entails an overall statement in comparative sociology and is not circumscribed to the Indian system, considered "at the extreme end of holistic societies" (Dumont, 1977:4). Subsequent studies have indeed used his theories as a "method of anthropological analysis" (after Barnes and de Coppet, 1985:1), as demonstrated at length in the works of the French research team ERASME (Équipe de la Recherche d'Anthropologie Sociale: Morphologie, Échanges), founded by Dumont himself, whose comparative studies have been published in various collections of papers (such as those edited by J.-C. Galey, 1984; Barnes and de Coppet, 1985 and S. Howell, 1990), and demonstrated as well, for an African context, in the writings of S. Tcherkézoff (1983, 1985).

A social framework as that of the Aruwund, organized on both a principle tending towards a hierarchical model and one which evokes egalitarianism as its primary value, does raise obvious problems with reference to Dumont's assumption that hierarchy constitutes the "ideology" of traditional societies²⁹. Equally unclear is the necessary relationship formulated by the author between hierarchy and holism as opposed to the binomial egalitarianism-individualism of modern Western civilization. Dumont clearly states that "there is a logical relation, in the sense that holism entails hierarchy while individualism entails equality" (1977:4). However, it has been pointed out for the hindu

²⁹ Dumont admits that equality can, to some extent, exist within the hierarchical type of societies, but never with the status of an "overall evaluation" (1977:5), that is, as "ideology".

caste system that hierarchy is not, as Dumont asserts, averse to an individualistic ideology and that "a reference to the whole"³⁰ is necessary in order to affirm individual identities (Gomes da Silva, 1989:171-3). With reference to the Aruwund, it is the hierarchical system of the *ayilol* which allows for "manipulation" of the ideology in order to affirm *differences* and individualities (cf. *supra*:115-6) while the *atubung* conform to a *holistic* kind of behaviour in which the individual may be seen to fade. Oral traditions on the founding of the state attribute particular relevance to the different mythical characters who are perpetuated by various *ayilol* at the king's court but distinctions between *atubung* remain unspoken as the latter stand together *and without individual claims* for the ancient order of Ruwej.

This lack of an individualistic concern among chiefs who consider themselves of *equal* status is stressed by the fact that the *atubung* are viewed as twins (cf. *infra*:255-8). Whenever the *atubung* come on an official visit to Musumb they present themselves at the king's palace walking in single file and singing one of the songs commonly chanted for twins. Their song and march on this occasion is referred to as *wend-a-munan* (from v.: *kwend*, "to walk"; *munan*, "group of people") for, as the Aruwund stress, they walk *together*, in a group, like twins. In fact, the *Mwant Yaav* can never summon one *kabung* alone to his court. The *atubung*'s egalitarian ideology does seem to entail a reluctance of self affirmations of identity. What greater threat to one's identity and individuality than to be considered "one of the twins"?

Dumont asserts that the anthropological community should overcome the modern individual's tendency to suppress "hierarchy as a value" (1979:vii-viii) and bring this concept into their discourse. The essays on dual classification edited by Needham (1973)

³⁰ After Dumont's definition of "hierarchy" as a conceptual framework providing the parts with a reference to the whole (1979:91,92). In Hindu society the hierarchical opposition of pure/impure constitutes the ideology by means of which the castes (parts) relate to the overall caste system.

are singled out as a good example of the neglect in the use of hierarchy as an analytical concept (1978:101-9). Anthropologists have expressed their perplexity on this and similar other statements by Dumont (cf. Howell, 1985:168, for instance) and I do sympathise with Howell when she states that "anthropologists, far from having an aversion to hierarchy, find it hard to avoid employing it in their interpretations" (*ibid.*:168-9). Like Howell, who felt at first impelled to think in terms of hierarchical orderings when analysing the Chewong, I also persisted in taking the "differences" between the *atubung* to reveal relationships of subordination. This was the case, for instance, when analysing the ceremonial insignia of these chiefs. While most of the *atubung* have a skin of a civet on which they sit on ritual occasions, some use the skin of a serval instead. The *atubung* could never fully account for such a distinction (the implications of which they absolutely undermined) and insisted that this had to do with the different ritual tasks they undertook at the king's investiture and that there were no differences in rank or status among them. Here, as in Howell's ethnographic context (*ibid.*:169,173-4), there are thus "distinctions" which do not entail hierarchical orderings.

Additional points that can be raised when considering Ruwund ideology relate to Dumont's idea of "hierarchical opposition" and of hierarchy as a concept that implies the necessary "encompassing of the contrary" (*englobement du contraire*) seen as the relationship between the part and the whole (1978:103-4;1979:397).

Addressing the authors of the essays in Needham's edition on dual classification in particular, Dumont differentiates "distinctive" from "hierarchical opposition" (1978:101). A hierarchical relationship (fundamental when establishing any kind of structural opposition) encompasses the concept of *value* (1978:105;1979:401) as it requires a different evaluation of the terms based on the way in which each term relates to an organizing whole. The symbolic equation of right hand *versus* the left can only be

understood considering this implicit reference to a totality, in this case the human body (1978:104). Central to the idea of hierarchy is also the concept of "levels" (*niveaux*, 1978:106;1979:397-403). In the biblical pair Adam/Eve, chosen for explanatory purposes, Adam is set in contrast to Eve at an inferior level but might be said to *encompass* Eve at one other (higher) level, as the sole representative of the human species (1979:397). Dumont's idea therefore implies that while there is *distinction* at an inferior level, at a superior one there is *unity*, that is, that opposition is neutralized and there is then identification of the supreme value with the whole. This is also the relationship which characterizes the opposition between hierarchy and power in India (1979:105).

This theoretical framework has been extensively used in anthropological studies. Tcherkézoff (1983) presents a detailed study of Nyamwezi symbolism hoping to demonstrate its usefulness in solving contradictions in the empirical data. Also essays such as de Coppet's on the tenure system of the Are'are (Melanesia) and Forth's on right and left symbolism in Indonesia (both 1985) resort fully to Dumont's idea of "encompassing of the contrary". I shall consider these concepts with respect to Ruwund ideology.

Ruwund society's "reference to the whole" can be said to reside in the underlying dichotomy which brings together a principle associated with the Ruwund *origins* (and the ideas of autochthony and ancestry) and an order which appears essentially concerned with the exercise of political authority and is associated with the *recent* and the *foreign*, that is, one which negates the link with the original land and its ancestors. There is indeed *opposition* - and therefore "connexity", to use Needham's terminology (1985:85), as well as *alliance* (cf. *supra*:68) - between these two poles represented by the ritual power of the *Nswaan Murund* and the *atubung* and the more political rule undertaken by the *Mwant Yaav* and the *ayilol*. Yet, the search for a *hierarchical* relationship between the two terms of this opposition reveals some misconceptions in Dumont's idea of hierarchy as a model

expressing the "ideology" in traditional societies.

Were we to accept Dumont's theory when he equates hierarchy with traditional societies as well as his assumption that an opposition necessarily entails a rapport of assymetry between its terms, we would expect the *hierarchical rationale* which defines the relationship between the king and the *ayilol* (and which accounts for the gradation among the *ayilol* themselves) to override the *egalitarian ideology* of the *atubung*. In fact, although the *atubung* and the *Nswaan Murund* constantly affirm their *equal* standing in relation to the sovereign at various levels of social interaction (leading us to think of Ruwund sovereignty as uniting two parallel powers of a different nature), the king, as the overall ruler of the state, can indeed enforce his authority upon the *Nswaan Murund* or the *atubung* who, in this sense, can be seen as dignitaries of an inferior rank. This is stated bluntly by the episode which I will recall here but is also asserted by all sorts of other empirical data.

After his enthronement in 1983, the ruling *Mwant Yaav* at the time of my fieldwork³¹ dismissed the *Nswaan Murund* in power and designated a new incumbent to fulfill the office. This attitude strongly conflicted with Ruwund ideology of kingship. It is the *Nswaan Murund*, as Ruwej in the myth, who decides on the future heir to the throne but it is unthinkable for the king to choose the *Nswaan Murund* who, in any case, can only be replaced after death. Years later the *Mwant Yaav*'s conduct was still commented upon with perplexity and disagreement by the Ruwund population, and with obvious disdain by the *atubung*, but his decision remained unquestioned. It was understood to be a submission of the ideological framework to the overruling political power of the sovereign.

³¹ *Mwant Yaav* Kabwiit Yisoj Kawel II.

Dumont draws our attention to the fact that hierarchy as "ideology" should not be confused with political power or social stratification (1979:103-8,317). The above example is one which Dumont might have taken to illustrate this confusion, which he refers to as inadequate for the Hindu caste system, between hierarchy and power. Indeed the recognized hierarchical supremacy of the king and his body of officials corresponds to a *depreciative* evaluation of their authority *at the level of ideology*. The Aruwund value the link to their origins and autochthony above all else and thus the *Nswaan Murund* enjoys a symbolic ascendance which overrules, in turn, that of the sovereign himself. The hierarchical structure which is here seen to subordinate the value of autochthony arises from the realms of authority and power which characterize the overall political organization of the state and, I agree with Dumont, it should not be confused with hierarchy as a conceptual ordering principle³².

On the other hand, although hierarchy is seen as the ideological principle which organizes the *ayilol*, rank and status among these dignitaries are permanently re-created, re-conquered and achieved by over-evaluating autochthony and ancestry as the ultimate values of Ruwund culture. The *cilol* of the *Nkalaany Mukaciland*, for instance, although a chief with no other dependent *ayilol*, is entitled to address one of the very highest court dignitaries, the *Rukonkish*, with a simple "walankaany mwaan!", the greeting used among commoners. Indeed the title history of the *Mukaciland* and the perpetual kinship system make him the *taat'uku* (father/close ancestor) of the *Rukonkish* (cf. *supra*:70-1). He is a chief of *autochthonous* origin linked to the Ruwund ancestral homeland towards whom, therefore, the *Rukonkish* owes deference.

Again, it is the criterion of ancestry which prevents the *iin mazemb*, the *ayilol*

³² Although if we consider, as argued, that rank and status (as well as the king's political power) are built, to a large extent, by resorting to the ideological framework, then it may not be at all legitimate to distinguish, even if only temporarily, "power" from "ideology".

representing the people of Ruwej at Musumb, from lying on the ground before the *Mwant Yaav* in a greeting of submission. The symbolic system confers on the *iin mazemb*, as heirs of the Ruwund ancestors, an improved status and a prerogative which no other *ayilol* would aspire to. These examples thus lead us to conclude that the new political hierarchy resorts permanently to its opposing criterion of autochthony and ancestry in order to assert, reinforce or even reverse itself. Both ideological criteria are thought of in continuous interplay and only by an overzealous exercise of systematization could we therefore attempt to hierarchize the two opposing principles which define the Ruwund understanding of kingship.

Other questions are raised by looking at this material. Ruwund oral traditions present hierarchy and egalitarianism, the two components of the same ideology, as somehow organized chronologically. The order of Ruwej, where all chiefs (the *atubung*) were of equal status and shared *the same* kinship relation towards the princess, pre-existed. as far as oral narratives are concerned, the order within which political cleavages and hierarchies were installed. Presented as a historical process, however, the order of the *atubung* is no more than *an ideological reference* by means of which the Aruwund perceive their society's organization (cf. *infra*:262-3). In fact, the term *kabung* itself derives from *ubung*, meaning the set of ritual actions performed at the king's investiture. The existence of the *atubung*, defined as ritual specialists, therefore presupposes that an order presided over by a king was already installed. Some informants did remark that the term *kabung* only originated *after* the arrival of Cibind Yirung which would therefore mean that the *atubung* are as much a part of the *new* order as the *ayilol* themselves. Similarly, the *ayilol* are perceived as "outsiders" even though they are descendants of the *local* population and have been for as long as the Aruwund can remember.

The ideas of an innovative hierarchical order and an indigenous egalitarian system,

thus, function as ideological constructs and were we to say, at this level, that hierarchy "encompasses" egalitarianism, the reverse would then be equally true. Both terms are needed to conceptualize each one of them as well as an ideology which comprises *both* at the same time. We could then say that opposition, not implying necessarily a *hierarchical* relationship, does imply "encompassing of the contrary" by *both* terms engaged in opposition.

With this we are steering away from Dumont's idea of "encompassing of the contrary" as a relation which links the part (the *encompassed*) to the whole (the *encompassing*), a view which assumes hierarchy as a *pre-existing* totality in relation to which parts acquire their meaning and existence (1979:400-1). With reference to dual symbolic classification, Dumont illustrates that the right and left hands are only viewed as such in relation to a whole (the human body) which pre-exists (as a reference) the eminence of both. The idea of an all-encompassing whole might be a useful and indeed comfortable rhetorical tool. However, should it be the totality that gives sense to the parts we are still left to account for the symbolic prominence of the hands as opposed to other parts of the human body which would equally convey the right versus left dualism. Why should right and left foot, for instance, not acquire similar prominence if they maintain an identical relationship with the whole? The symbolism of right and left hands, therefore, does not ultimately reside in their position in relation to a whole and the idea of a pre-existent totality might indeed be no more than a virtual concept created for the benefit of explanatory discourse.

With respect to the Ruwund system, the hierarchical model which prevails among the *ayilol* does not oppose the ideology of equality represented by the old order of the *atubung* as if the former "pre-existed" the latter. It is not as if the two principles were separable terms (of an opposition) whose distinctive contours could be neatly defined. We

saw how the two principles are invoked in continuous interplay. Indeed, the new political rule and the primitive system of Ruwej and the *atubung* only assume the quality of "new" and "old" orders, respectively, from the moment that society conceives for itself an ideological past. Only then does a value of "ancestry" emerge and, by opposition, that of a recent and innovative rule. The two are thus concomitant and absolutely unseparable categories (cf. *infra*:262). Moreover, rather than one principle pre-existing the other, the two only exist in the faded and blurred way in which they are conveyed when asserting or reviewing hierarchies and positionings (as well as at other levels of social interaction). Finally, even within the hierarchical system of the *ayilol* the dichotomy between the two poles remains, and "equality" is permanently summoned to create differences among them. Hence it is that the *iin mazemb* represent, among the *ayilol* at the king's court, the principle of ancestry and the original and local order of Ruwej (they are *aan-a-Ruwej*, "children/descendants of Ruwej"). Defined at first as part of the new hierarchical order of the Ruwund king with other *ayilol*, the *iin mazemb* paradoxically follow an ideology of non-submissiveness which recalls that of the *atubung*. Contrarily to other *ayilol*, they salute the king from their own seats and without prostrating themselves on the ground³³. Further, their link to the Ruwund ancestors accounts for the *ritual* tasks which they perform at the king's preliminary investiture ceremony at Musumb prior to the enthronement at the Nkalaany River (cf. *infra*:205-7). Hierarchy and equality, thus, produce what we may call a "caleidoscopic effect" in which the two principles constituting the ideology of kingship undergo continuous refraction and are constantly played against each other in the making of hierarchy as well as in the process of establishing a hierarchy which is continuously *in the making*.

³³ Only the *Rukonkish*, as "*maaku* of the *Mwant Yaav*", and, of course, the *Nswaan Murund*, as the representative of Ruwej, are also granted this same prerogative.

CHAPTER V

ON COURTS, SPACE AND METAPHORS

The political as a symbolic structure

Hierarchical and symbolic relationships among Ruwund dignitaries are further revealed in the uses of space and in the rules and prescriptions which define how space is to be used. The layout of the residences of Ruwund nobles in the geography of the royal village (or in any regional court, for that matter) is not fortuitous, nor are the places dignitaries occupy while attending a meeting (*citentam*) in the public square aleatory.

That space is not arbitrarily conceptualized is by no means news in anthropological discourse, and it has even become the particular and dominant focus of interest in recent studies on the symbolism of vernacular architecture. Works such as Bourdieu's classic text on the Berber house (1973), Tambiah's account of the classification of animals in northern Thailand (1973), as well as the more recent works of Blier (1987) and Waterson (1990), or the studies assembled in Bourdier and Alsayyad (1989), have amply illustrated how buildings, and the arrangement of space within and around them, are meaningful to their users.

When we turn to the Ruwund construction of space we soon realize that the rigorous pattern displayed by the distribution of dignitaries in the king's and other chief's courts defines relationships which proceed from the symbolic level, the symmetries in the topography of the space expressing symbolic oppositions themselves. Royal and minor courts can indeed be described as "organized spaces" and relations between dignitaries are

both moulded and acted out through relative positioning and placement within their boundaries. In other words, position is here a concept imbued with meaning, and spatial contrasts and distinctions are *metaphors* for symbolic relationships transmitting the principles which constitute Ruwund ideological thought.

My task in this chapter will be to develop a picture of how this metaphorical use of space can be seen to encode and express symbolic ties between Ruwund titleholders as well as elucidate the rationale which emerges from such configuration of the space. I shall examine and compare the constitution of both the king's court and those of regional *ayilol* to conclude that they are founded upon the same rules and, consequently, in the light of the overall organization of the Ruwund state Musumb, the capital of the country and the royal village, loses specificity and can be best viewed as being merely *the largest* court of the senior of all Ruwund chiefs, the *Mwant Yaav*.

Musumb, the royal court

The village where the king and his court live is a large settlement of around 20 000 inhabitants (according to the 1986 census)¹ divided into numerous wards (nearing seventy, according to the lists supplied by the *Mwant Yaav*'s office) each headed by a *cilol*. Here are congregated a great number of the highest *ayilol* of the state with some of their subordinate dignitaries (lesser *ayilol* and/or *anyubu*, as the case may be). A regional chief (*cilol*) who may visit Musumb will lodge in the ward of the chief with whom he or she maintains the closest perpetual tie as asserted by the oral traditions of his/her title². Eventually he may have the option of using another of his perpetual ties in order to benefit from a "related" chief's hospitality. In the case of a minor *cilol*, who is subordinate

¹ The numbers had raised to around 30 000 on my return to the field in 1991, cf. *supra*:26,n.6.

² For ease of writing I shall, from now on in this chapter, use masculine forms only.

to a chief living in Musumb, he will lodge in the ward where his senior *cilol* resides.

When the great public meeting takes place at Musumb - for which some of the *ayilol* of peripheral areas might be summoned or choose to attend - hosting visitors is thus a major task of nobles at the capital. Every chief has one or more "slots", so to speak, where he can reside on his visits to the royal village. Commoners will also explore the full range of possibilities among their kinship ties allowing them to find a suitable host when they eventually travel to the capital. The layout of the royal village (cf. *Figure 5*) is, therefore, very precise, and the positions of the *ayilol*'s dwellings within the village space conform to a rigorous pattern which is also the one observed by the dignitaries in the presence of the sovereign.

Musumb is formed by four big sections defined in relation to the *Mwant Yaav*'s palace which occupies a virtual center: the front, called *mes*; the rear which is designated as *mazemb*; the right hand side, the *mukal*; and the left hand side or *diwiil*. Each of these sections are, in turn, divided into smaller "parts" (*yikunku*, sing.: *cikunku*) under the supervision of major *ayilol*. Hence, we can talk of the *cikunku* of such or such *cilol* belonging to the *mes* or of another *cilol* belonging to the *mazemb*³. Some parts of the royal town under the jurisdiction of certain *ayilol* have specific names. Thus, for example, the section of Ruwej is called "caas", while that of the *Mutiy* is designated "makal".

Upon this traditional organization is superimposed a modern division of wards (French *quartiers*) which the Aruwund may commonly refer to as *mikal* (sing.: *mukal*). The term "mukal" is used here in a broader sense (as it should be otherwise employed to refer *specifically* to the right hand sector of Musumb). A part of town headed by a major

³ These parts are somehow understood as "villages" which today find themselves gathered in Musumb. In fact, the houses within a sector of a certain *cilol*, in some cases, still distribute themselves along the sides and front of their main chief's residence, giving shape to a small courtyard (*diibur*) which recalls the spatial organization of a common Ruwund village (as well as of the royal court itself).

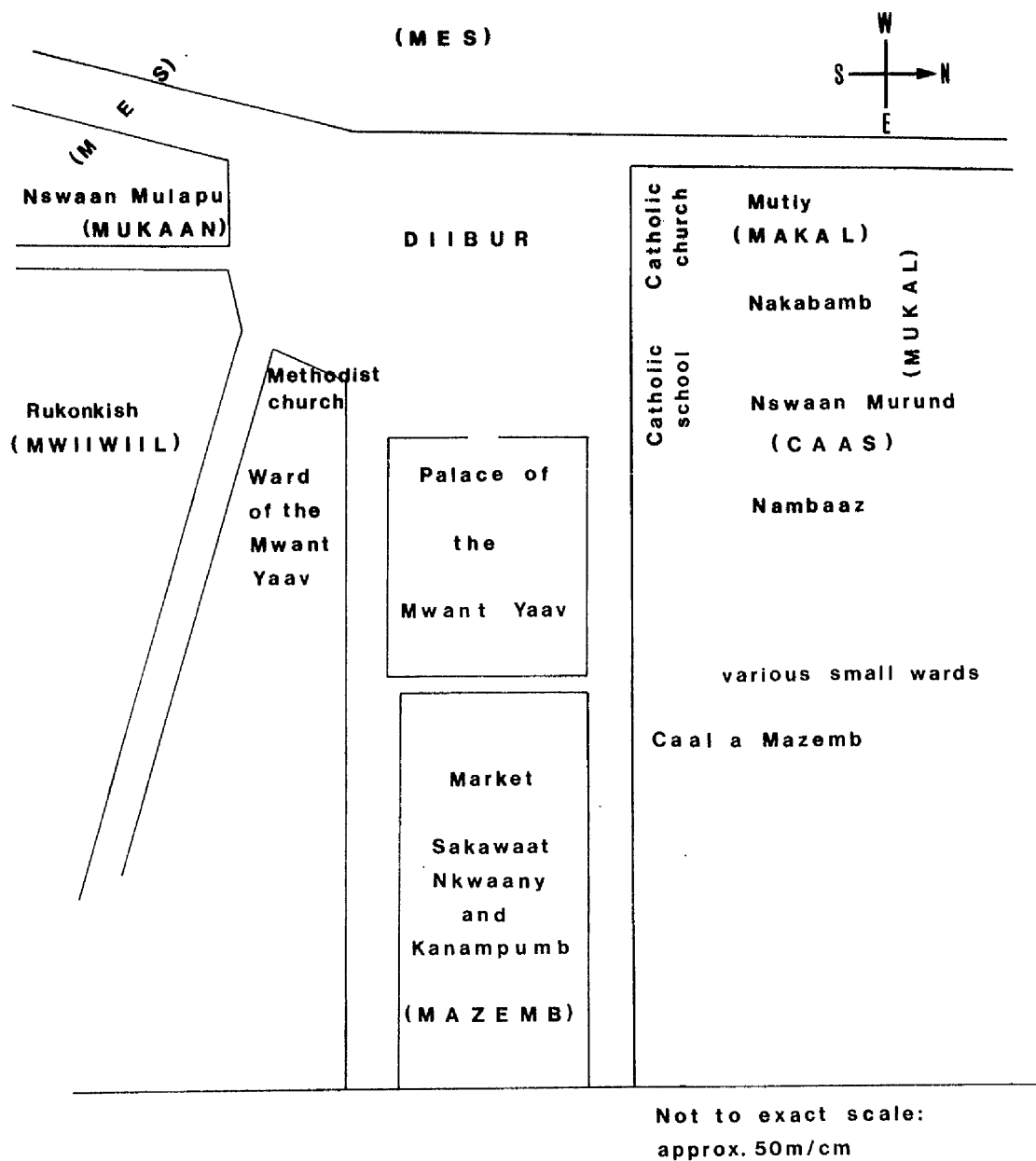


Figure 5: Centre of Musumb in the 1980's (based on Hoover's map, 1978b:108)

cilol may consist of one single ward or, otherwise, include various wards under the jurisdiction of other (subordinate or independent) *ayilol*.

The *Mwant Yaav*'s palace is built within a rectangular wall forming a compound called *cipang* which opens up into a very spacious courtyard (*diibur*) where all major public gatherings take place. In the palace lives the king with his wives, their children and the servants called *amwiilomb* who are in charge of all domestic duties related to the life of the *Mwant Yaav*'s spouses at the palace. Adjacent to the king's compound is, to the left, a major section of Musumb, commonly referred to as "the ward of the *Mwant Yaav*". There inhabit the so-called *atushaal* of the sovereign, a number of servants who work inside the royal palace near the king. The term *atushaal* (sing.: *kashaal*), deriving from the verb *kushaal* ("to stay"), is understood to include all those "who stay indoors to look after the royal compound". Belonging to this group are, among others, the *ayimangat*, who carry the king's litter (*mwow*) on ritual occasions, the royal musicians (the *amavwaar* or *anvaar*), an executioner, and the *iin kut'umbish* (or *iin kubaaz*) whose role is to praise the sovereign and make jokes during public meetings in order to soothe the king's fierce character which might result in reprimands and punishments to his subjects. All these servants (as well as their wives) are recruited collectively to work at the king's palace whenever the need arises to undertake a major task such as sweeping the whole area inside the royal enclosure. The head of the *atushaal* is named *Nfatushaal* and is, nowadays, considered a *cilol*. The *mes*, "the front" (lit.: "the eyes"), is situated right across the public square, facing the royal palace. It includes quarters mainly inhabited by *ayilol* (with their subordinate nobles and relatives) who, in the times of the empire, constituted the advanced guard of the Ruwund army (cf. Dias de Carvalho, 1890:231). Among these are war leaders (*atulaal*, sing.: *kalaal*) who were in charge of commanding the front line troops such as the *Mwiin Kapang*, the chief of the village of Kapang (Kapanga) which is

the government post of the administrative zone of Kapanga, and the *Mwiin Citazu* who, nowadays, inhabits his own large settlement to the east of Musumb. Other major dignitaries among the *iin mes* (the people of the *mes*) are the *Mwant Kas* (who lives away from Musumb in his own village, called Kas), the *Mwant Kaleng* and the *Ntambu-a-Kabong*, among others, all *ayilol* renowned as warriors.

The senior amongst the *iin mes*, considered the *chief* of the *mes*, however, is the *cilol* with the title of *Kankurub*. Oral traditions recount that the *Mwant Yaav* one day sent one of his subordinates, named Mujing, to cut off the head of an enemy chief and make from the skull a container from which the king was to drink palm wine (*maruvu*). Mujing accomplished the task but kept the drinking-vessel for himself. On hearing that the *Mwant Yaav* had ordered him decapitated, he hastens to plead for mercy. Arrived at the palace, he presents himself before the king walking on his knees to beg the sovereign's forgiveness. The *Mwant Yaav* accepts his apologies and gives him the chiefly title of *Kankurub* (from *kukurub*, "to walk on knees"). This is still the way in which this chief should salute the king in public assemblies.

Still belonging to the *mes*, although considered rather separate, is, to the front-left of the royal enclosure, the section of the *Nswaan Mulapu*, called *mukan*⁴. The *Nswaan Mulapu* is, in Musumb, the *cilol* who supervises the royal town when the *Mwant Yaav* is absent. These days he is assisted in this task by a committee of nobles referred to as "college du *Mwant Yaav*". Previously, a set of major royal dignitaries were permanent members of the *college* and were in charge of discussing matters and reaching decisions. As the population at the capital increased, however, it was felt that other dignitaries should occasionally participate. Consequently, the committee today has a different composition

⁴ *Mukan* means (a) group of people, (b) left side of the *mes*, (c) left side wing of army.

according to the specific outstanding affairs left behind by the king on each departure. The *Nswaan Mulapu* remains the only permanent member, and the *college* can include *ayilol* from areas other than Musumb itself. When the king returns, it is the *Nswaan Mulapu* who is to present the *Mwant Yaav* with a clear picture of events that occurred in his absence.

The office of *Nswaan Mulapu* (lit.: "the successor of the chief", cf. Hoover, 1978b:543-4) is designed for the preparation of a future heir to the throne. Should he prove competent he will become a strong candidate for the king's office. The Aruwund praise this dignitary by addressing him as "Kanans ka Ntambu", "the little finger of the lion [the *Mwant Yaav*]" (with the sense of "after the king, it is you")⁵ as he is, in the perpetual kinship system, the *mwaan-kanc* (younger brother/cousin) of the *Mwant Yaav* and he who replaces and assists the sovereign in the ruling of the state. In the times of the empire, it was the *Nswaan Mulapu* who commanded the army's left wing, named *mukan*, just like the side of Musumb which this chief supervises.

The *mukal* is the right hand "side" (*mutambu*) of the Musumb. The senior dignitaries inhabiting this section of the royal court are the *Mutiy* and the *Nswaan Murund* herself⁶, the very highest dignitary of the royal court, equalled only by the sovereign himself.

The *Mutiy* inhabits the front-right ward of the *mukal*, designated *makal*, directly opposite to the *Nswaan Mulapu*'s. He is the foremost counsellor of the king and a major *cilol* with many dependent chiefs at the Nkalaany as well as in Sandoa and Dilolo zones. He is, in a manner of speaking, the "right arm" of the sovereign or, as the Aruwund

⁵ The full praise (*nkumbu*) is: *Kanans ka ntambu, wafa ntambu kanans kashaal*, "The little finger of the lion, the lion dies, the little finger stays", meaning that when the *Mwant Yaav* dies it is the *Nswaan Mulapu* who replaces him.

⁶ Despite being the *Kabwiit Mukamulang* the *cilol* in charge of administrating and supervising this side of Musumb. It is he who controls, for instance, the presence or absence of *ayilol* belonging to the *mukal* in the *citentam*. For this reason the *mukal* is also often referred to as "*mukal wa* (of) *Kabwiit Mukamulang*".

metaphorically put it, he is the "branch" (*mutiy*) of the "big tree" (the *Mwant Yaav*). His advise is particularly sought in settling problems concerning land. Formerly, he was in charge of imposing the *Mwant Yaav*'s rule upon other chiefs. He is said to have brought (v.: *kusend*) many new territories into the kingdom, which is why he is given the praise-name of "Cisend Mangand", "the bearer of the land". He greatly enlarged the dominions of the empire and, in the past, the *Mutiy* was to fight wherever conflicts sprung up in Ruwund territories as well as help the *Mwant Yaav* in supervising his vast domain. He was also the commander of the army's right wing in times of war.

In the *mukal*, the right hand side of Musumb, are also located the dwellings of the *Nswaan Murund* and her relatives (this ward has the specific designation of *caas*). Ruwej was given this title for, as the only one who proved to be a true friend (*murund*) among Nkond's children, she became Nkond's successor (*nswaan*, cf. *supra*:38). Her role in Musumb is, as heiress of the princess Ruwej, to remove the *rukan* from a deceased *Mwant Yaav* and hand it over to the new king at the investiture ceremony in the Nkalaany (cf. *infra*:203-4).

Other major nobles living on the same side are the *Nakabamb* and the *Nambaaz*. Their wards have no special name and are referred to as "kwa Nambaaz" and "kwa Nakabamb" ("at the place of..."). The *Nakabamb* is said by some informants to represent Karumbu, Ruwej's eldest sister (*mwanamaaku*)⁷, who departed the Ruwund homeland after the exodus of those refusing to tolerate the rule of a foreigner. Having been summoned by Ruwej, she later returned to Musumb leaving among the Lunda-Ndembu, the Cokwe, and the Minungu (in Angola), numerous *ayilol* who are her subordinate chiefs

⁷ Some other informants, however, refused to accept the *Nakabamb* as the heiress of Karumbu, either claiming that she represents a wife of one of the *Ant Yaav* or that she was a mere younger cousin (*mwanamaaku*) of Ruwej. The present incumbent of the title herself, however, takes the office as perpetuating Karumbu.

and who are thus expected to greet her formally on their occasional visits to the capital. In fact these peoples know of their lundahood through their link to the *Nakabamb*, whom they call *maaku* ("mother", cf. *supra*:49).

The *Nambaaz*, who is considered *mpaanyend* (sister/female cousin) of the sovereign⁸, plays a very important role as an intermediary between the *ayilol* and the king. Should the *Mwant Yaav* dismiss a *cilol* from his office or should a *cilol* aspire to be installed as chief, the latter might, in either case, seek the intervention of the *Nambaaz* who will plead their case to the *Mwant Yaav*. This mutual understanding between the king and the *Nambaaz* reproduces that which is believed to unite, in the Ruwund kinship system, an ego to his/her *mpaanyend*⁹. Between them problems should be easily solved, misunderstandings cleared effortlessly, solutions reached. Her role as mediator between the *ayilol* and the sovereign is praised in the *nkumbu* of her office:

Mulaal wa kwiit kwiit
mulaal walaalaaw antambu
mwalaala ni aan ayisump

"The unburnt patch of bush (*mulaal*) along the forest
 where the lions sleep,
 there sleep also the leopard cubs"

*Mulaal*¹⁰ is a metaphor for the home of the *Nambaaz* where the *ayilol* (the lions and the leopards, meaning "the 'children' of the *Mwant Yaav*", i.e. his subordinate chiefs) seek protection in a manner which recalls that of the animals who, in the dry season, look for shelter and refuge in unburnt areas of the bush.

⁸ The *Nambaaz* is considered *mpaanyend* (sister/cousin) of both the *Mwant Yaav* and the *Nswaan Mulapu* for all three are *aan* (children/nephews or niece) of the *Rukonkish*.

⁹ Any ego (male) can eventually address his *mpaanyend* by the term *nambaaz* which is a kinship term as well as a chiefly title.

¹⁰ The name of the first titleholder of the office of *Nambaaz*, as the title traditions recall it, was *Mulaal Kat*.

Other functions of the *Nambaaz* include those of announcing the first pregnancy of each of the sovereign's wives, of lodging mother and child until the former recovers from delivery, naming the king's offspring and bringing, the first time, the newly born into the palace. The choice of a king's new bride can also be delegated to the *Nambaaz* who, in any case, is in charge of taking care of a king's future wife until the wedding takes place. She will then lead the new spouse into the palace and, in a ritual performance, tell the sovereign and the audience about her origins before she hands her to the king. The *Nambaaz* will also mediate between the sovereign and his wives in cases of adultery or other marital problems.

The left hand "side" (*mutambu*) of Musumb, directly opposite to the *mukal*, belongs to the *Rukonkish* alone¹¹. It is not sub-divided into smaller sectors and can be said to constitute one single ward, the largest in Musumb. Here newcomers can lodge on their first visit to the court when unable to find a suitable host, that is, when they do not have relatives in town. This should only happen in the case of commoners, for *all ayilol* are supposed to have perpetual kinship ties with dignitaries at the royal court. This part of the capital is commonly referred to as *mwiiwiil* (the contracted form of *mu diiwiil*, meaning "in the *diiwiil*") for visitors coming from all places settle here "like birds descending from the sky" (from the verb *kuwiil*, "to land, to settle, to descend") and the people of the *Rukonkish* are, consequently, called *amawiil*.

Finally, at the rear of the *Mwant Yaav*'s compound are the quarters which form the *mazemb* and which constituted, in the times of the empire, the rearguard of the Ruwund army. Many major *ayilol* inhabit the *mazemb* (such as the *Sakawaat Nkwaany*

¹¹ Although it is the *Mwant Muyimp* who is the *cilol* in charge of implementing decisions and supervising affairs concerning this left sector of Musumb, in much the same way as the *Kabwiit Mukamulang* does for the *mukal* (the right hand side).

and *Kanampumb da mazemb*, the *Kawungul*, the *Caul-a-mazemb* and the *Mwaad Mwiish*, among others), all of them heading a number of houses or a ward inhabited by the respective sub-nobles with their families. Also having accommodations in the *mazemb* are a number of "household" officers (not *ayilol*) such as the crown-maker (the *Nfayileng*), the court jester, entitled *Muyew*, the servant who pours the palm wine for the *Mwant Yaav*, etc. Finally, it is here that is located the section belonging to the *Mwaad*, the first wife of the sovereign, which has the specific name of *mwiimbay*.

The most prominent *cilol* among the *iin mazemb* (the people of the *mazemb*) holds two office titles, that of *Sakawaat Nkwaany* and *Kanampumb da mazemb*. Oral tradition recounts that the senior among these two titles was that of *Sakawaat Nkwaany* who was the head *cilol* among the *iin mazemb*. Fearing conspiracy and betrayal from the *mazemb*, however, one of the sovereigns sent a person of his intimate confidence, the future holder of the office of *Kanampumb*, to watch over the *mazemb*. As the *Aruwund* put it, the *Mwant Yaav* cannot watch both what occurs "in front of him" and "at his back". The *mazemb*, the wards behind the king's enclosure, represent this threat *from within*. Once in the *mazemb*, the *Kanampumb* got married to a daughter/niece (*mwaan*) of the *Sakawaat* and became, therefore, his in-law (*taat'uwen*). This is indeed the perpetual kinship tie which links the two titles and on the grounds of which the office of *Sakawaat* can always claim legitimate seniority over that of *Kanampumb*.

On the death of the *Sakawaat* there was no one to succeed him. His *rukan* was entrusted to a *mwaan* (child/nephew) of the *Kanampumb* who later also succeeds to his father/uncle (*taat'uku*)'s office, thus accumulating two titles. Since then the two offices have been held by one single incumbent who keeps both insignia: the *rukan* of the *Sakawaat Nkwaany*, which links him to the ancestral power of *Ruwej*, and the *mpak ya mukwaal* (sword) of the *Kanampumb*. As a matter of fact the *Aruwund* often fail to

differentiate between the two offices and may refer to the senior among the *iin mazemb* by either titles or even by the combined name of "Sakawaat Kanampumb".

Among these two offices, however, the Aruwund insist on the higher ranking of the *Sakawaat*'s power. It is the *Sakawaat Nkwaany* who is believed to be the ancestral chief of the *iin mazemb*, for this *cilol* is a direct descendant of Nkond-a-Matit (he is *mwaan* of Karumbu and therefore of Ruwej also) and the chief to whom, on his death, Nkond would have entrusted the *rukan* to be later given to Ruwej. Indeed the *iin mazemb* represent, in Musumb, the Ruwund ancestors and the local rule, considered the original owners of the *rukan*. After the death of a king it is to the *Sakawaat* that the Aruwund entrust sovereignty. This dignitary will occupy the *Mwant Yaav*'s throne during the interregnum which he will only vacate after a payment is made in public assembly by the future king (cf. *supra*:206)¹². The Aruwund say of the *Sakawaat Nkwaany*

*Caan ca angomb,
diitand da ku mwimbu,
kakwemb ka musak-a-yikumbu*

"The large plain of the cows,
the throne of the *Mwant Yaav*¹³,
the tree¹⁴ of the roof-builder"

thus emphasizing the greatness of his office. Its greatness is that of the extensive plains where cows feed, for his office is as critical to the power of the *Mwant Yaav* as the pillar which supports the structure of the roof in a house. Indeed the *Sakawaat* is the original

¹² The two offices (of *Sakawaat* and *Kanampumb*) do intermingle to a great extent. In the 19th century report of Dias de Carvalho it is the *Kanampumb* who is indicated as the major chief of the *mazemb* (cf. 1890:237). Hoover also refers the *Kanampumb* as being the *cilol* who sits on the royal seat during the interregnum (1978b:546; also Biebuyck, 1957:796 and Lucas, 1968:59).

¹³ "Ku mwimbu" (lit.: "At the border") is a praise-name for the *Mwant Yaav*, meaning that his kingdom is very large, that it has no boundaries.

¹⁴ *Kakwemb* is a very hard tree favoured for roof building *due to its strength*.

guardian of the *rukan*, the source of royal power, and the person who will hand over the throne to the newly elected king.

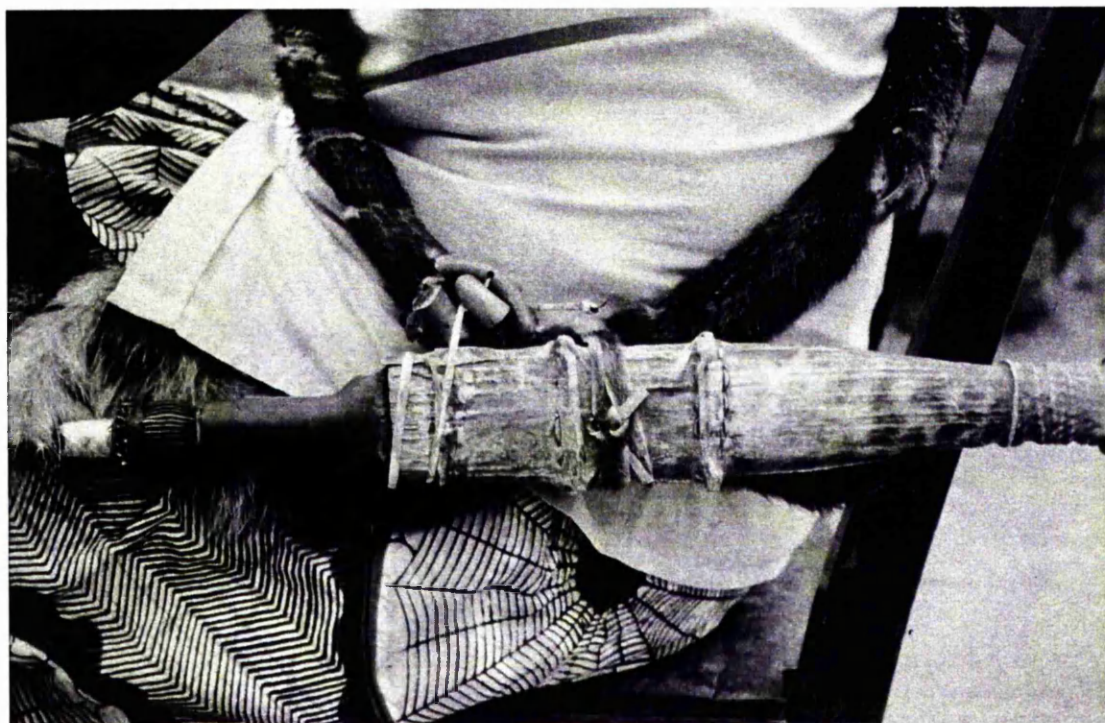
The etymology of this title is of great interest. "Sakawaat" means, rather curiously, "he of the pirogue" ("Nkwaany" is believed to have been the name of the first incumbent of the office). The Aruwund explain that it is the *Sakawaat* who guides the people between two reigns as if crossing between two river banks. This period of liminality, so expressively conveyed by the linguistic term itself, is believed to be one which might endanger the unity of the Aruwund. Disoriented, as it were, the Aruwund might disperse would it not be for the guidance of the *Sakawaat*.

As for the *Kanampumb da mazemb*, his main role is to spy on the *mazemb*, from where conspiracy is believed to emanate, and to defend the king from treachery. Formerly, the *Kanampumb* was the commander of the personal guard of the *Mwant Yaav* in the army. Furthermore, this *dignitary* is the caretaker of the *Mwant Yaav*'s children (*wan-a-wan*) whom he protects from those who might attack them. For this he has a sword (*mpak ya mukwaal*) attached to his insignia of office, and a set of small calabash tops (referred to below as *yilongal*¹⁵) containing the ingredients used to fabricate protective medicines (cf. *Photograph 5*). In praise of the *Kanampumb*'s office the Aruwund say:

waan-a-waan udjiita mikwadj
waan-a-waan udjiita yilongal
kasongil mwaan walaal

"The guardian of children who wears the fetishes,
 the guardian of children who wears *yilongal*,
 a child [man] denounced by him [of conspiracy or betrayal] dies.

¹⁵ Word commonly used to mean the set of old/broken kitchen utensils (such as old saucepans, pieces of calabash, etc.) employed while preparing food.



Photograph 5: The Sakawaat Nkwaany's mpak ya mukwaal with the yilongal.

The king's public audience

Musumb, as described above, appears to follow a rigorous layout. Indeed the disposition of the main royal dignitaries and their residences in the topography of the capital is not arbitrary, and the same relative positioning among court officials can be observed in the confines of a more circumscribed space, the public square (*diibur*) facing the king's palace, whenever a major meeting takes place.

A great audience, called *citentam*¹⁶, is convoked by the sovereign a few times a year to communicate news to the population (or, otherwise, measures emanated from the official government), organize collective activities, invest or depose a chief (*ayilol* only), reprimand acts of his subjects¹⁷. These are the more immediate reasons for a public gathering and those which the Aruwund will evoke to justify its taking place. Yet, the *citentam* is a privileged occasion for court officials to exhibit their statuses and for the general public to learn of Ruwund state etiquette and protocol, the dignitaries' relative positioning, their praise-phrases and ceremonial rights¹⁸. It is an event in which symbolic statuses are codified and relationships of subordination rehearsed in a display which attracts thousands of spectators and may congregate several hundred chiefs from within Kapanga zone accompanied by their sub-nobles and relatives.

When this public meeting takes place servants of the king draw a square with manioc flour in the courtyard which faces the royal compound within which the *ayilol* will

¹⁶ From verb *kutentam* which means "to hold a public meeting" but also "to be straight (correct)" (cf. Hoover, 1976).

¹⁷ When the affairs to be dealt with do not concern the general public the king might choose to convoke the *citentam* inside the royal compound and, in this case, the ritual display is abridged and the audience attending the meeting smaller.

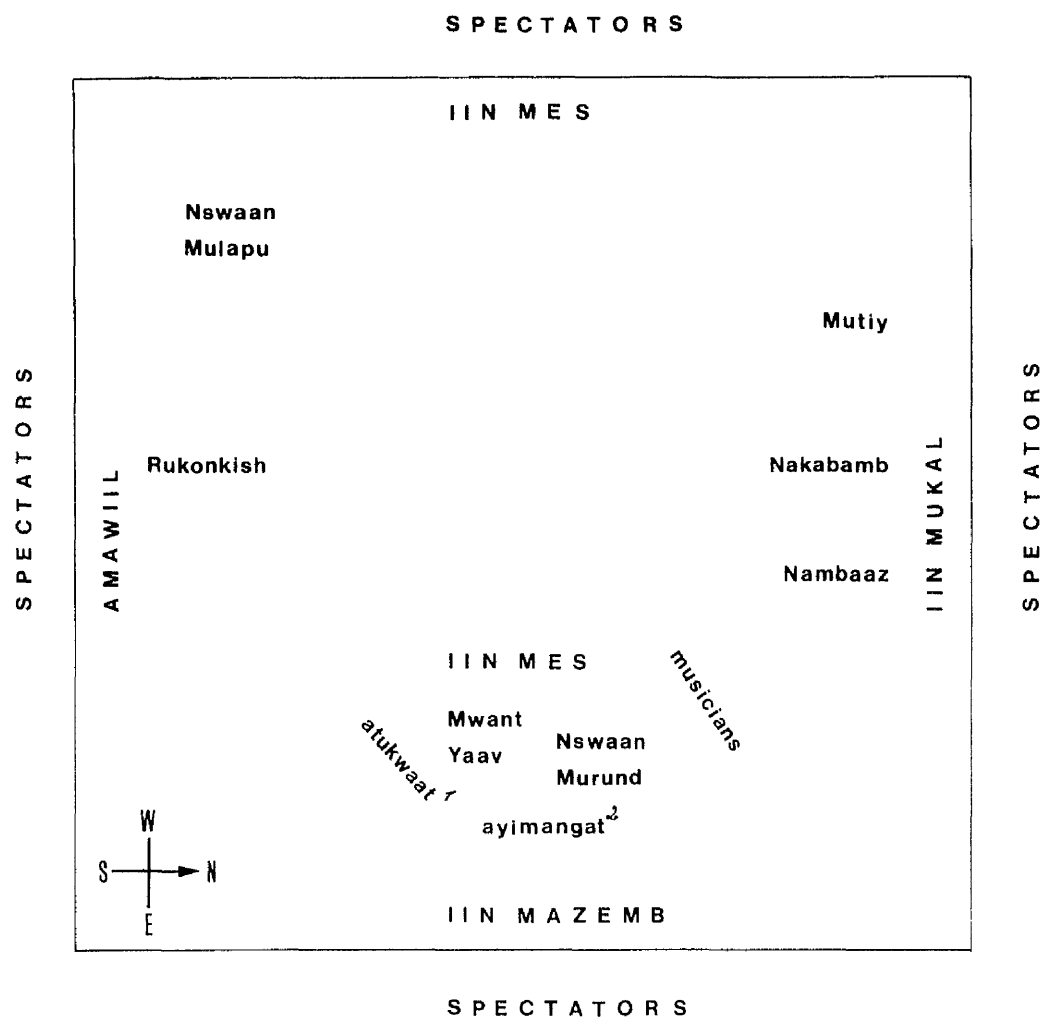
¹⁸ In fact, learning how to move, place themselves and perform within the socially constructed space of the public courtyard allows both dignitaries and audience to undergo a process of cultural and symbolic "apprenticeship" which recalls that described by P. Bourdieu in his analysis of the Berber house (1973).

occupy their assigned places sitting on their specific animal skins: antelope (*ncil*) for male titles in general; leopard for women dignitaries (the *Nswaan Murund*, the *Rukonkish*, the *Nakabamb*, the *Nambaaz* and the *Mwaad-a-Mulapu*); leopard and lion for the *Mwant Yaav*. The king sits on a throne placed on top of the animal skins in the middle of the square while all other dignitaries occupy their skins spread on the ground. Just behind the *Mwant Yaav* stand the *atushaal*, the servants of the royal palace. The *Nswaan Murund* has her place next to the sovereign, on his right hand side. The onlookers stand outside the square (cf. *Figure 6*).

In former times the order of entrance of court dignitaries in the *citentam* conformed to a precise routine (cf. Dias de Carvalho, 1890:417). Nowadays, however, the nobles take their places as they arrive. Once the population is gathered, the king comes out of his palace by the front gate carried on a litter (*mwow*) by the *ayimangat* (sing.: *cimangat*), the official litter-bearers of the *Mwant Yaav*. The *Nswaan Murund* stands on the king's right hand side and the cortege moves towards the square performing, to the rhythm of the drum (*cinkuv*)¹⁹, the chiefly march which reproduces the walk of the chameleon (v.: *kunanik*).

Once the sovereign reaches the center of the square and has occupied his throne, the meeting begins. Each of the dignitaries in turn is to perform a ritual salutation to the king. Considering the large number of nobles attending the ceremony, this display might take a couple of hours, while the actual speech of the *Mwant Yaav* to the population, the stated reason for the gathering, may take no more than 10-15 minutes. In fact, no matter how eager the Aruwund might be to hear the actual news from the sovereign, it is the performance of the salutations which they follow most enthusiastically.

¹⁹ A trapezoidal flat drum.



1- Guards of the *Mwant Yaav*

2- Litter bearers of the king

Figure 6: Positioning of the court dignitaries in the royal citentam

The ritual salutation to the king begins with the *Sakawaat Nkwaany*, the senior among the *iin mazemb*²⁰. This is followed by the sequential greeting of the other dignitaries belonging to the *mazemb* who, with the *Sakawaat*, sit lined up *behind* the king's throne (mirroring the position they occupy in the layout of the town behind the royal palace). Contrarily to most *ayilol*, the chiefs of the *mazemb* remain seated while saluting the king. They rub their chest, face and forearms with white kaolin powder (*mpemb*) - an action which is referred to as *kwiipan*(v.) *mpemb* - and clap hands uttering the verbal salutation "karombu!". This greeting (v.: *kwiifukwiil*) is acknowledged by the king with a hand gesture (v.: *kubengish*) while replying "yow amboku!", an exclamation of politeness.

Only after the *iin mazemb* do other *ayilol* salute the king. These perform a more elaborate kind of greeting. Each *cilol* will leave his/her place and walk towards the center of the square in the dance step of the chameleon already mentioned for the king and swinging the fly-flap (*mwimpung*) to the rhythm. This display, understood as the display of one's power (*kufuny ulabu*, "to ostentate the power"), is watched by an amused audience. Howls of joy (*tulabwiil*), laughter and applause make this an occasion of great rejoicing as dignitaries exaggerate the movements in their performance. Once facing the sovereign, the *cilol* kneels on the ground and if he has a sword (*mpak*), removes this insignia of power. He then takes some white kaolin powder from a small skin parcel (*diisaku*) and rubs the chest, face and forearms with it. Finally, the *cilol* kneels and greets the *Mwant Yaav* with a clap of hands uttering the verbal salutation "karombu!" (or "(a)vude vude taat'uku!" for female dignitaries). The *cilol* then prostrates himself on the ground lying on both sides of his body (v.: *kubumburik*). Should the dignitary's title be

²⁰ However, should the *Mukaciland* be present the privilege of saluting in the first place would be his for he is the *ngaak* (grandfather/ancestor) of the *Mwant Yaav* and *taat'uku* (father/uncle) of the *Rukonkish*.

inherited from the paternal side the notable should lie on his right side first, if traced to his maternal kin he should start by prostrating himself on his left side (the same right versus left opposition is codified when clapping hands). The dignitary then repeats the greeting by clapping hands and returns to his place, once again performing the chiefly gait of the chameleon. As he walks back the following dignitary is already on his way to the center of the square to carry out his own salute to the king. While the ritual greeting takes place the *Mwant Yaav* addresses the dignitaries uttering the praise-names (*nkumbu*) of their respective offices, to which the nobles respond with submissive expressions (such as "nsalejaam!", "my master!"; "karombu!") or praising the king in return. In this the *Mwant Yaav* counts with the assistance of a protocol expert who whispers to the sovereign the titles and respective praises of the less known nobles who might attend the meeting. The *Mwant Yaav* also makes frequent jokes and might even make short reprimands, both of which the nobles are to acknowledge without replying.

The order in which the *ayilol* perform their greetings to the *Mwant Yaav* is very precise. Once the chiefs of the *mazemb* have concluded their ritual salutation it is the turn of the *ayilol* belonging to the *mukal*, the right hand side of Musumb. Observing the position they occupy in the court space, the chiefs of the *mukal* sit lined up along the right hand side of the square. They greet the sovereign following the order in which they are seated and all of them, including the *Mutiy* (the senior among these chiefs), perform the complete salutation described above.

Next to salute is the *Nswaan Mulapu*, the chief of the *mukan*, who sits (with the *Mwant Kandal* and the *Mwiin Dinying* when present, cf. *infra*:215) to the front-left corner of the square. All the nobles from the *diiwil*, the quarters of the *Rukonkish* which constitute the left hand side of Musumb, come next. Again, they salute by the sitting order. Among the dignitaries of the *diiwil*, the *Rukonkish* is the only one who, as *maaku*

of the *Mwant Yaav*, does not stand or prostrate herself on the ground.

This ceremonial performance closes with the greetings from the *mes*. The *iin mes* are divided into two groups. Some sit right in front of the *Mwant Yaav* while others, still facing the sovereign, sit further away at the edge of the square. The first saluting are the *ayilol* placed closer to the *Mwant Yaav*. This group from the *iin mes* is constituted by the *Mukakatot*, who sits in the middle, and some of his *ijikur* (grandchildren/descendants) by the perpetual kinship system²¹. The *Mukakatot* comes from the Nkalaany and is considered *mantu* (maternal uncle or one other *maaku*'s brother/cousin) of the *Mwant Yaav*. The history of his office recounts that, being the king's *mantu*²², he was sent to Musumb to take care of and look after the first *Mwant Yaav* until he was old enough to take up the royal office. He is considered the guardian (*nlij*) of the king. In this task he is assisted by the other *ayilol* who sit together with him at the *citentam*. Being the king's *mantu* and therefore *ngaak* (grandfather/ancestor) of all *iin mes* (who are *aan-a-Mwant Yaav*), the *Mukakatot* benefits from the unique privilege of sitting on a skin of an hyena (*cimung*) and, although members of the *mes*, he and the nobles who sit with him are not to perform the royal march of the chameleon before the sovereign.

The second group of the *iin mes* closes this ritual display. It consists of the major *ayilol* and greatest warriors of the *mes* such as the *Kankurub* (who greets first), the *Mwant Kaleng*, the *Ntambu-a-Kabong*, *Wan-a-Mutombu*, *Cishidil*, among others. Once all *ayilol* present at the audience have saluted individually, all the dignitaries are to clap hands in a collective salutation. Only then does the *Mwant Yuav* initiate his speech and deals with the questions for which the *citentam* was convoked.

²¹ Most commonly are the *Mwaanaat*, the *Mwant Ruwumb* and the *Mwiin Ciwumbu* who accompany the *Mukakatot* to the *citentam*.

²² For he is, by the perpetual kinship, the *Rukonkish*'s *mpaanyend* (brother/cousin).

The prescribed behaviour of dignitaries in their greeting to the king, as well as the relative positions they occupy, codify and reveal hierarchical and symbolic relationships among the *ayilol*. The observation of the pattern which underlies the spatial organization when nobles assemble in the public square shows that dignitaries preserve their relative places in accordance with the distribution of their residences in the royal village. The *citentam* thus encompasses every subtlety of the spatial arrangement in the court as a whole. I shall now examine both the use of space and the salutation system as mechanisms of conveying meaning and symbolic relationships.

Among the *ayilol*, the *iin mazemb* are the first to present their greetings to the king in the public assembly. Descendants of Nkond-a-Matit, they are considered the representatives, in Musumb, of the people of Ruwej. According to the oral traditions, as mentioned previously, it was to the *Sakawaat Nkwaany*, their senior chief, that Nkond would have entrusted the *rukan* to be transmitted to Ruwej once she had attained maturity. Being the ancient owners of the *rukan*, the people of the *mazemb* enjoy a certain supremacy over the king which results, ultimately, from their local origin and their genealogical tie to Ruwej. They are, as descendants of the Ruwund ancestors, the *angaak* (grandparents/ancestors) of the *Mwant Yaav* and claim respect and deference from the sovereign. Consequently, among the *ayilol* of Musumb, the chiefs of the *mazemb* are the only group of nobles who in their ritual salutation to the king at the great audience are not expected to lie on the ground in a display of submission.

The *iin mazemb* are defined in opposition to the *iin mes*, the last group of nobles to salute the king. "Children/descendants of Ruwej" (*aan-a-Ruwej*) and representatives of the local rule, the population of the *mazemb* inhabits, as mentioned, the wards situated behind the king's compound. In front of the *Mwant Yaav*'s residence, on the other hand, are located the *iin mes*, considered "children/descendants of the *Mwant Yaav*" (*aan-a-*

Mwant Yaav). The candidates to the office of *Mwant Yaav* are members of the people of the *mes* (or those who are able to claim a genealogical link to them) while the *iin mazemb*, representing the Ruwund ancestors, are in charge of choosing, among the candidates to sovereignty, the one who shall be elected *Mwant Yaav*. Once a consensus has been reached between them they present him to Ruwej so that she may pronounce the final verdict concerning the choice of her future "husband" and new king.

It is also the *iin mazemb* who, as holders of the source of power, carry out the pre-investiture ceremony taking place in Musumb which allows the heir to rule until he is fully invested by the *atubung* at the Nkalaany. The *iin mes* are, on the other hand, naturally *excluded* from this ceremony as possible candidates to sovereignty. The power is indeed transferred from the *iin mazemb* to the *iin mes*. The Aruwund themselves say that it is from the *mazemb* that stems the strength and power of the *Mwant Yaav*. In fact, the opposition between the people of the *mes* and those of the *mazemb* is clearly expressed at the end of the installation ritual carried out in Musumb. Just before addressing the population in a public audience, the new sovereign comes out of the palace by the rear gate which opens into the *mazemb* and, sacrificing a goat, recites the praise-phrase of the *Ntambu-a-Kabong*, thereby acknowledging his filiation to the people of the *mes*. Making his way to the public courtyard, the king will then preside over his first *citentam*.

The symmetry of the relative positions occupied by both *iin mes* and *iin mazemb* in the organization of the space thus codifies a whole set of structural dichotomies opposing the people of Ruwej to the "children/descendants of the *Mwant Yaav*" (*aan-a-Mwant Yaav*), i.e. opposing the representatives of the *local* order who choose among the candidates to the royal throne to those who can become heirs and therefore claim a close engagement in the *new* rule. The symbolic submission and commitment of the *iin mes* to the political system which characterizes the new state is duly expressed by the manner in

which they present their greetings to the king. They perform the dance of the chameleon associated with royalty and must lie on the ground as a sign of submission to the sovereign and the order he represents. The submission of the *iin mes* has its utmost expression in the salutation of the *Kankurub*, the greatest dignitary among the *mes*, who, on the ritual occasion of a *citentam*, marches on his knees before the sovereign.

Proceeding to the choice and election of the new *Mwant Yaav*, the complicity of the *iin mazemb* in the new order is, on the contrary, merely circumstantial. They are the effective holders of the original power and, as such, represent a constant threat to the *Mwant Yaav* who, heir of the mythical hero Yirung, remains at the symbolic level an intruder in Ruwund society. Despite being the people of the *Sakawaat Nkwaany* who select the new *Mwant Yaav*, it is from the *iin mazemb* that the sovereign will always fear betrayal. In fact, as oral tradition asserts, part of the people of Ruwej had refused to accept the seizing of power by a stranger. In the same way that the brothers of the princess, feeling humiliated, abandon the country and instigate a migration, in the foundation myth, so the *iin mazemb* assume the people's non-submission in the court organization. This antagonism - which is, after all, a mere corollary of that between Ruwej and Cibind Yirung - is clearly verbalized in the praise-phrase which denounces the people of the *mazemb* as "the two-faced traitors" (*ampumb a mazu maad*), thus revealing their ambiguous character.

Again, the coexistence of two office titles heading the *mazemb* expresses an ambivalence which, in turn, only reiterates that of Ruwej and her people in the myth of origin of the state (at once refusing to participate in the founding of a new order and creating, nonetheless, all the conditions required for its successful emergence, cf. *supra*:67-8). Indeed, while the *Sakawaat Nkwaany* represents, within the *mazemb*, the Ruwund ancestors and the old rule, the *Kanampumb*, whose task is to spy on the *mazemb*, claims

proximity to Cibind Yirung and the *Mwant Yaav*, not to Ruwej. Oral tradition stresses that this notable is a loyal and trusted friend of the sovereign, originally *alien* to the people of the *mazemb*, and his insignia, the sword (*mpak ya mukwaal*), one which was brought into Ruwund country by the Luba hunter.

But space also functions as a metaphor in the opposition between the *Nswaan Murund* and the *Rukonkish*. These female senior dignitaries occupy symmetrical positions in the court, the *Nswaan Murund* being referred to as "the 'mother' of the right side" while the *Rukonkish* is "the 'mother' of the left side" (cf. Biebuyck, 1957:796,803). Their dwellings and the quarters they supervise are situated on *opposite* sides of the royal palace and their geographical positioning is a means of portraying (as well as establishing) the symbolic dichotomy in which the two female senior titles are engaged. Representing Ruwej and Kamong respectively, the *Nswaan Murund* and the *Rukonkish* assume in the king's court the unreconciled dualism which opposes the two wives of the Luba hunter in the foundation of the sacred rule: the *Nswaan Murund*, heiress of Ruwej and considered "*mwanamaaku* (sister/cousin) of the *atubung*" affirms the *disjunction* between the pre-existent indigenous order and the new rule supposedly brought from afar by Cibind Yirung. The *Rukonkish*, perpetuating Kamong as "*maaku* (mother/aunt) of the *Mwant Yaav*", assumes, in turn, the *alliance* with Yirung and a bond with the order he installed.

These two nobles define a whole set of structural oppositions which are conveyed in the partition of the space as well as in the perpetual kinship relations they maintain with the sovereign (cf. *supra*:97-8). The *Nswaan Murund*, committed not to the king but to the *atubung* and the ancestral order, is considered the king's *wife* and, concomitantly, his "sociological mother" (Hoover, 1978b:121; Biebuyck, 1957:803). The *Rukonkish*, representing Kamong who gave birth to the first *Mwant Yaav*, is the biological mother of the sovereign and therefore maintains with the king a symbolic relationship of

motherhood.

This analytical framework allows an understanding of the salutations which these dignitaries are expected to enact before the king while attending the *citentam*. The *Nswaan Murund*, assuming her non-submissiveness to the new royalty, does not owe the king any sort of public greeting while the *Rukonkish*, partaking in the political technicalities of his rule, salutes the *Mwant Yaav* using the verbal formula prescribed to all other female *ayilol*. Her privileged status in the court as *maaku* of the *Mwant Yaav* is safeguarded, however, by the fact that she is to greet sitting down and therefore abstains from prostrating herself on the ground as well as from dancing the march of the chameleon as do most *ayilol*.

The predetermined geography of the court can be further exemplified by the symmetrical positions occupied by the *Nswaan Mulapu* and the *Mutiy* who inhabit the *front-right* and *front-left* sections of Musumb respectively. These high dignitaries were responsible for the command of the right and left flanks of the Ruwund army (cf. Duysters, 1958:87,92) and, in former times, they further stressed their symbolic relation by making their way into the *citentam* *simultaneously* and from *opposite* sides of the public square (cf. Dias de Carvalho, 1890:417).

The relative positioning of these two court nobles can also be read in the light of the principles which characterize Ruwund ideological thought. The *Nswaan Mulapu* is the *cilol* who replaces the *Mwant Yaav* when absent and assists him in supervising the state. The nature of this office, therefore, implies deep involvement in the affairs of the state and a close relationship to the king. The perpetual kinship system expresses this by making the *Nswaan Mulapu* the *Mwant Yaav*'s *mwaan-kanc* (younger brother/cousin), and incumbents of the title are indeed chosen among the sovereign's close relatives (*cisak*). The *Nswaan Mulapu*'s engagement in the new royalty is further codified in the band which decorates his and the *Mwant Yaav*'s crowns alone. This band, whose drawing

differs from that of all other *ayilol*'s crowns (compare *Photographs 6 and 7*), is, curiously enough, named *kabond ka ngal*, "the band of the *ngal*", a *ngal* being a child whose upper teeth emerged before the lower ones and who, like twins, is believed to be born as chief/king (cf. *infra*:248). The Aruwund say that is through possessing this band that the *Nswaan Mulapu* inherits the power and strength of the *Mwant Yaav*'s office.

The *Mutiy*, on the other hand, while being the foremost counsellor of the king, exhibits a symbolic affiliation to Ruwej and the native order she represents. The first *Mutiy* was a real son (*mwaan*) of Karumbu (Ruwej's sister/cousin), for some informants, or a son of Ruwej herself according to others (cf. *supra*:54). In any case, the kinship tie which is perpetuated is that of "*mwaan* of Ruwej". Linked to the autochthonous rule the *Mutiy* has, with the *iin mazemb*, a crucial role in the king's pre-investiture ceremony at Musumb (cf. *infra*:205-6). This opposes him to the *Nswaan Mulapu* who is a possible (and privileged) candidate to the throne and therefore, like the *iin mes*, has no role in the king's installation.

Being linked to the local primitive order arisen at the Nkalaany, the *Mutiy* exhibits the same unconformity towards the rule of the *Mwant Yaav* as that which characterizes the *iin mazemb* at the court. Dias de Carvalho's careful description of the history of royal succession mentions the incumbents of this office as highly disturbing elements who systematically make attempts against the stability of the state enticing pretenders to the throne and engaging in conspiracies. There are innumerable episodes which could be referred to that effect and countless coups d'état of which the *Mutiy* was the main promoter (cf. Dias de Carvalho, 1890:530,575-77,587-89,596,634-38,638-42,646-55; Byvang, 1937:1/5,561; 2/2,202, for instance).

The adverse nature of this notable is explicitly acknowledged by Dias de Carvalho who - as he narrates the episodes of royal succession -opens brackets to exclaim:



Photograph 6: The Nswana Mulapu's crown (yiibangul ya yaapu ya makond) with the kabond ka ngal.



Photograph 7: The Mutiy wearing the yiibangul ya yaapu ya makond with the common kabond.

"The Muitia [*Mutiy*], (always this pernicious entity!)" (1890:663; my translation). Later the author makes further considerations to this regard: "Traditionally that the descendents of the Muitia have been the promoters of rebellions and of the Muatianvuas' [*Mwant Yaav's*] deaths, and though some kings had those dignitaries killed that has not served as an example since those succeeding to the Muitia, always judging themselves as superior, continue to imitate the bad policy of their predecessors. This is due to the preponderance to which the Muitia always aspires over the senior members of the court" (1890:635; my translation). These passages make clear that it is not the behaviour of individual incumbents of the title which is at stake but, instead, an attitude inherent to the office itself. Indeed the *Mutiy's* link to the primitive order makes him, like the *iin mazemb*, a symbolic source of conspiracy and betrayal, the *Mutiy* attempting against the integrity of the power whose continuity the *Nswaan Mulapu*, as the symbolic successor to the royal throne, is to ensure. The Aruwund stress this fact by pointing out that, being the senior *mwaan* of Ruwej, the *Mutiy* would have been the legitimate successor to chieftainship had it not been for the "usurpation" of power by Cibind Yirung. The opposition between the *Nswaan Mulapu* and the *Mutiy* is thus ideologically understood as that between an "usurper" (the *Nswaan Mulapu*) and the "legitimate" successor to chiefly power (the *Mutiy*). Of course, in reality (and within the new order installed), it is the *Nswaan Mulapu* who is indeed the legitimate official heir to the throne while the *Mutiy* plays the role of the traitor who takes advantage of the weaknesses of power to claim (by force) a right which is no longer his.

It is no accident, therefore, that the link between the *Mutiy* and Ruwej is so often stressed in the literature. Biebuyck, for instance, writes: "À cause de ce lien intime entre Mutéi [*Mutiy*] et la Rweej [Ruwej], la Swanamulunda [*Nswaan Murund*] héritière de la Rweej est considérée plus particulièrement comme mère de ce côté" (1957:797). The

foremost dignitaries inhabiting the *right* side of Musumb (*mukal*) - the *Mutiy* and the *Nswaan Murund* - are therefore closely associated to Ruwej (whom the *Nswaan Murund* represents herself) and the autochthonous people.

The *Rukonkish* and the *Nswaan Mulapu* - both residing on the *left* side - are, on the other hand, nobles whose titles can only be defined in relation to the *Mwant Yaav* and the new order he represents: the *Rukonkish* is considered the king's *maaku*; the *Nswaan Mulapu*, being a *mwaan-kanc* (younger brother/cousin)²³ of the sovereign and the symbolic successor to the throne, finds himself necessarily committed to the order installed by Yirung of whom he may eventually become the new representative. Once more the rigidity of the topographical positioning exhibited in the court is not deceptive: on the *right* are nobles who stress their linkage to Ruwej²⁴ while on the *left* reside the *Rukonkish* and the *Nswaan Mulapu* holding perpetual titles which are only articulated in relation to the king as the heir and successor of Yirung. Indeed, we may conclude, the high personalities at the king's court find themselves organized in a structural arrangement within which oppositions are established at levels which go beyond the merely geographical and ultimately refer to the symbolic dichotomy which we had already encountered as fundamental in Ruwund ideological thought.

Regional courts

The spatial configuration we recognize in the organization of the royal court is also apparent in minor courts of *ayilol* living in outlying villages. These *ayilol* gather, in the settlements they supervise, their own court of nobles. A major *cilol*'s court (such as the

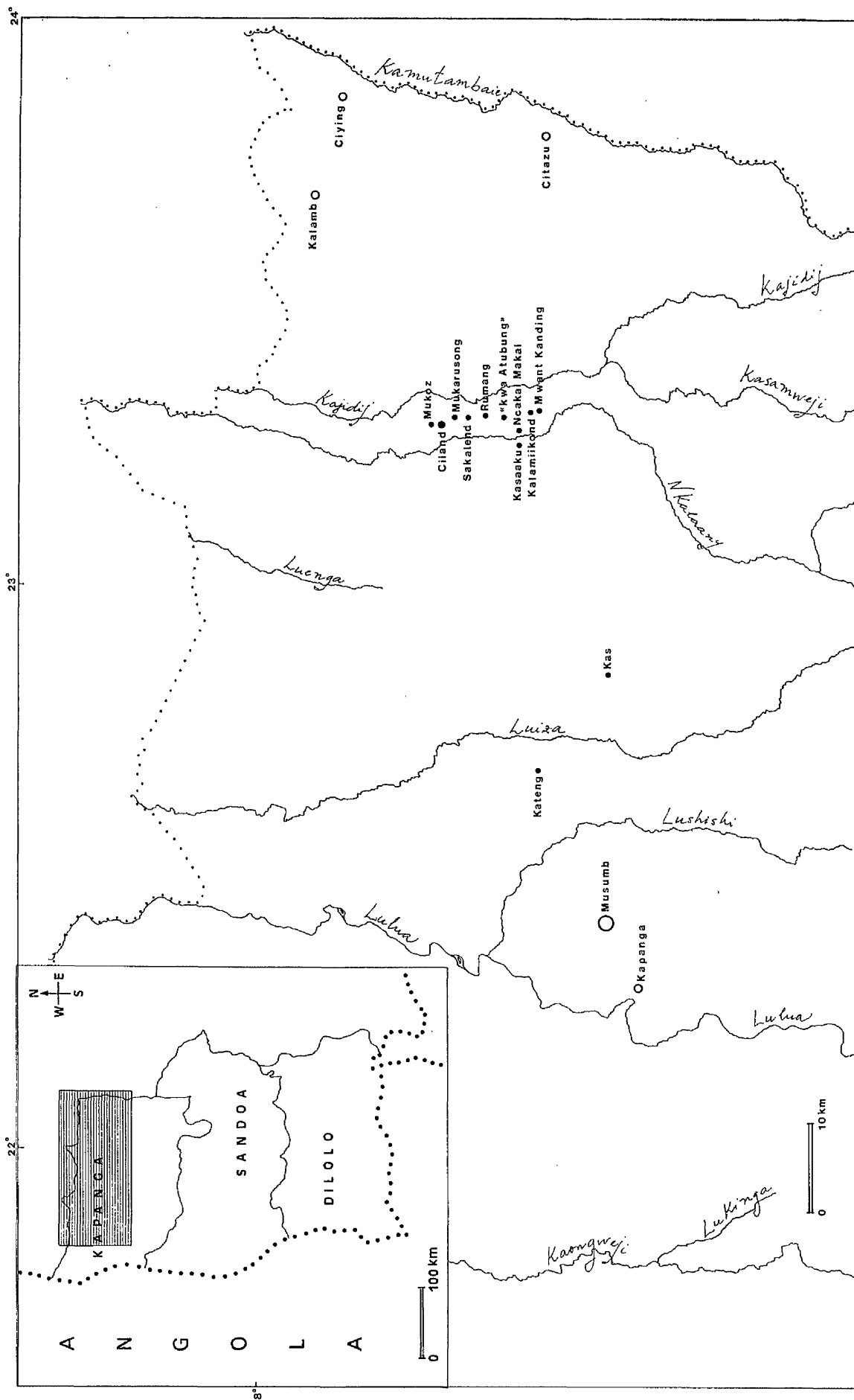
²³ And therefore the *Rukonkish*'s *mwaan* (son/nephew).

²⁴ This is confirmed by Hoover who states that the location of certain dignitaries on the side of the *Nswaan Murund* is a sign of seniority of the titles they hold and their tie to Ruwej (1978b:171,n.21).

Mwiin Citazu's, for instance) is constituted by his (or some of his) dependent *ayilol*, his *anvubu* (sub-nobles) and the chief's ritual installers, the *atubung* (or *atushiiv*) who represent the ancestral owners of the territory under the *cilol's* rule. Courts of lesser *ayilol* may include only *anvubu* and *atubung*. Whatever the case may be, however, regional courts seem to evoke, if with lesser complexity, the organization which shapes the capital. The village of Ciland, a settlement located in the Nkalaany area where I undertook fieldwork, will be recalled here to illustrate the organization of one such peripheral court.

Apart from the Ruwund capital, all villages are referred to by the perpetual title of their chiefs. Ciland is, for instance, the name of the village of the *cilol Mukaciland* and Sakalend that of the *kabung Sakalend*. The Aruwund say "I am going to *Mukaciland's* place" (*niyiil kwa Mukaciland*) meaning not that they are going to visit the *cilol* himself but to see someone in his village. The concept of "village" (*ul*, pl.: *mal*) is here understood as "the place of its chief (and his/her people)" and not as a territorially bounded settlement. Hence, when a *cilol/kabung* moves his residence to another site, the village newly formed will still receive the same name as the settlement left behind. Ciland, for example, has had different locations, the former having been to the east of the Kajidij River. Today, with a hundred houses and a population of approximately 420 inhabitants (in July 1988), Ciland is the largest of the villages located in the area between the rivers Nkalaany and Kajidij along which the *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* have their own settlements (cf. *Map 4*).

Ruwund villages headed by *ayilol* present a common spatial organization with the chief's residence, like in Musumb itself, opening up to a large courtyard (*diibur*) where audiences take place to discuss matters of interest to all villagers (cf. *Figure 7*). The house of the head *cilol*, the village leader (house no.1), is often surrounded by a fence (also



MAP 4: MUSUMB AND THE INTERRIVERINE AREA OF THE ATUBUNG OF THE MWANT YAAV
(MAP ABOVE: KAPANGA ZONE IN THE LUALABA SUB-REGION)

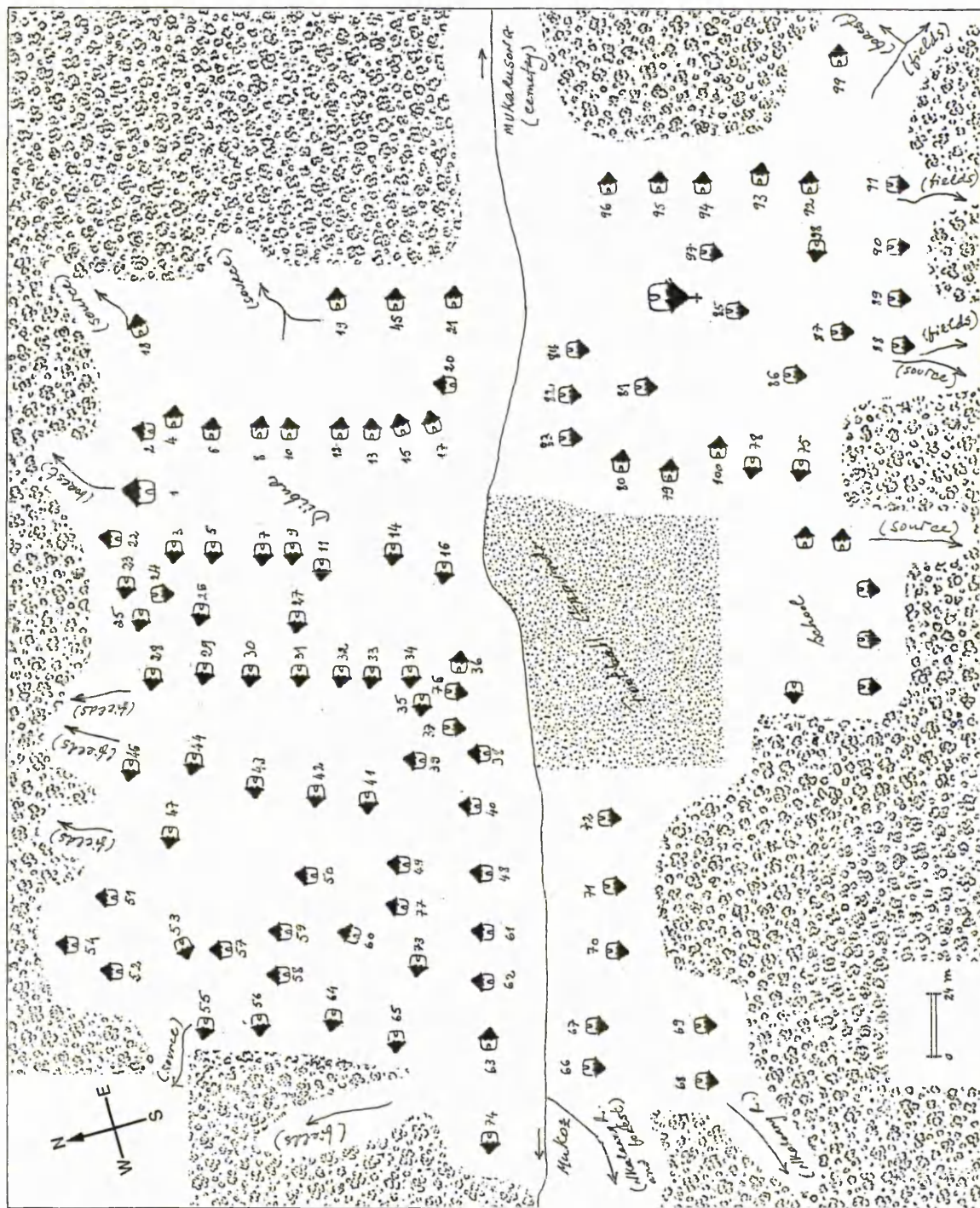


FIGURE 7: PLAN OF CILAND (JULY 1988)

called *cipang*) exhibiting a configuration similar to that of the king's palace in Musumb. In the case of Ciland, the chief's residence is no longer enclosed and it is merely its location facing the public square (as well as its slightly larger proportions) which distinguishes the chief's house from a commoner's dwelling.

The *Mukaciland*, the village headman in Ciland, is considered a *mwaan* (child/descendant) of Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz who is also the ancestor to whom some of the *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* trace their genealogy (cf. *infra*:180,183,194). He who would receive the perpetual name of *Mukaciland* was, according to the oral history of this title, one of the three "children" (*aan*) of the chief Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz, called Muland. They all lived at the river and forest of Ipesh, located on the eastern margin of the Kajidij River by the forest of Ibwaaz²⁵. This was the original site of Ciland. At Ipesh all villagers went to make offerings (v.: *kupesh*) to the ancestors (*akish*) who are believed to inhabit that forest (cf. praise of Ciland, *supra*:50). When Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz (also known as Samuland, "the father of Muland") died, the sacred bracelet (*rukan*) was entrusted to his youngest child Muland who then became the chief entitled *Mukaciland*²⁶. It was here, at Ibwaaz and Ipesh, that Cibind Yirung came to request the services of a blacksmith whose daughter, Kamong, he married. From their alliance a child would be born who later became the first *Mwant Yaav*.

The oral traditions recount that while in possession of the *rukan* of Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz the *Mukaciland* was considered the senior among Ruwej's *anamaaku* (siblings/cousins)

²⁵ The names of such places are always used with the locative prefix *mu-*, denoting "in". Hence the Aruwund say Mwiipesh ("in/at Ipesh") and Mwiibwaaz ("in/at Ibwaaz").

²⁶ According to the *Mukaciland* in office (and although this information was contested by a former incumbent of the office) the title means "he who buys" (from verb *kuland*, "to buy"). On his father's death Muland would have tried to acquire the secret of the *malap*, the medicine for healing at the king's investiture ritual. The traditions tell that he had to buy it from a healer (*ngang*) with the beads (*usang*) of the ancestors which his father had left him and which were then used as a means of exchange.

and, according to some accounts, he was indeed the senior *kabung*. However, when the first *Mwant Yaav* came into power and Kamong, considered a *mwaan* of the *Mukaciland*, is made *cilol* and bestowed the title of *Rukonkish*, the *Mukaciland* becomes a *cilol* himself. In reality, from the moment Cibind Yirung marries Kamong, the *Mukaciland* gains a perpetual kinship tie towards the *Mwant Yaav*, heir of Yirung. Being the *taat'uku* ("father/paternal uncle") of the *Rukonkish*, the king's symbolic mother/aunt (*maaku*), he becomes the official *ngaak* ("grand-father/ancestor") of the Ruwund sovereign and therefore now closely bound to the *Mwant Yaav* and his rule. And, as an official of the new state, he has to drop his role of *kabung* (which is in absolute conformity with the Ruwund ideological thought, as a *kabung* is the representative of an order antagonic to that to which a *cilol* is associated). As a matter of fact, due to this ambiguity, the office of *Mukaciland* presents some compromises which justify the reason why, being a *cilol*, this dignitary salutes the king at the great assembly in Musumb with the gestual greeting (otherwise) exclusive to the *atubung* (while exclaiming "karombu!", like any other *cilol*). Being *ngaak* of the *Mwant Yaav* he does not prostrate himself on the ground but, instead, outlines the gesture of *kubumburik*(v.) by touching the ground with his elbows from a sitting position. Again, he salutes the great *atubung* just like the latter do among themselves, i.e. shaking the left hands.

The chief *Mukaciland* does not have any subordinate *ayilol*, only sub-nobles or *anvubu* and his own *atubung* who invest him in the office of *cilol*. In a special position is the holder of the title of *Mukaleng Ngoy* who was, originally, the senior among the land trustees of the *Mukaciland*'s domains before the jurisdiction of that territory was handed to the *Mukaciland*. Some claim that he was the main *nshir-a-ngand* ("land owner") of that domain, others that he came to be a *cilol* himself prior to his submission to the rule of the *Mukaciland*. In the perpetual kinship system the *Mukaleng Ngoy* is considered the younger

brother/cousin (*mwaan-kanc*) of *Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz* and, therefore, an ancestor of the *Mukaciland* himself. For this reason the latter owes him deference and respect. The *Mukaleng Ngoy*, who was formerly a village chief himself, now inhabits the *Mukaciland's* place where his seniority is acknowledged by allocating to his jurisdiction all the left side of *Ciland* (cf. *Figure 7*).

Other than the special case of the *Mukaleng Ngoy*, the space in *Ciland* is sectioned and attributed to each of the *Mukaciland's* sub-nobles (*anvubu*) in an arrangement already familiar to us. A *nvubu* has a number of houses constituting the section/ward (referred to as *cikunku*, or, very commonly, *mukal*, cf. *supra*:135) under his supervision. Among the *Mukaciland's anvubu* some are sub-nobles whose titles can also be located in other peripheral courts, as well as in *Musumb*. Hence, like the *Mwant Yaav* himself (and like so many other village chiefs), the *Mukaciland* has a *Nswaan Mulapu*, the senior among his *anvubu*, a notable who is the official successor to his office and in charge of replacing him when absent. Also, like the king himself, the *Mukaciland* has his own *Mwaanaat* (currently with no incumbents), a notable who represents the first-born son of the *Mukaciland* (of the first incumbent of the title), a *Mwaadyaat* (the *Mwaadyaat Katoy*²⁷), another official son of the chief, and a *Mwaan-a-Mweny* (lit.: "the child of the visitor/stranger"). The wards of these village dignitaries face the *Mukaciland's* palace constituting - like at the royal court - the *mes*²⁸.

²⁷ In *Musumb* the greatest *Mwaadyaat* of the *Mwant Yaav*, entitled *Cishidil*, is also called *Mwaadyaat Katoy*.

²⁸ Also at the king's court these titles designate chiefs among the *mes*.

In *Ciland* the opposition front-right/front-left which, in *Musumb*, opposes the *Nswaan Mulapu* to the *Muty* is not relevant and, therefore, the *Nswaan Mulapu* of the *Mukaciland*, being the senior among the *in mes*, should occupy his legitimate position across the *diibur*, facing the *cilol's* palace. In the particular case of *Ciland*, however, the actual houses belonging to the ward of the *Nswaan Mulapu* are "unduly" displaced to the right hand side of the chief's residence for the area immediately facing the public courtyard appeared more suitable to build a primary school and football ground.

The *Mukaciland* is further assisted by a *Ncakai*, a second to the chief although with lower status than the *Nswaan Mulapu*, whose ward constitutes the right "side" of Ciland. Likewise, the *Ncakai* of the *Mwant Yaav*, entitled *Ncakai Makal*, is a *mwiin mukal* (a member of the *mukal*). Although he permanently inhabits his own village at the Nkalaany River (where he is the guardian of the first *musumb* of the *Ant Yaav*), whenever he comes to the capital he lodges at the ward of the *Mutiy* (for the *Ncakai* is the *Mutiy*'s *mwanamaaku*, a *mwaan* of Karumbu) and therefore in the *mukal*, the right hand side of Musumb.

Other sub-nobles at the *Mukaciland*'s court whose titles can also be located in Musumb are the *Nambaaz*, the village chief's official sister/cousin (*mpaanyend*) who, in this case, has no ward of her own or fixed residence within the village space but who, at a village public audience (also designated as *citentam*), maintains her office's position to the *right* of the senior chief, the *Mukaciland*. Finally, as in so many other regional courts, a dignitary entitled *Namwaan*²⁹ represents the official *maaku* (mother/aunt) of the village leader. The position of the *Namwaan*, as the *cilol*'s official *maaku*, immediately relates her to the *Rukonkish*³⁰, considered the *maaku* of the *Mwant Yaav*, whose quarters are located to the *left* of the sovereign's palace. Accordingly, the *Namwaan* of the *Mukaciland* occupies a fixed residence situated on the left hand side of the chief's palace (house no.2).

The above are dignitaries who often appear in the organization of courts of *ayilol*, following the structure which underlies the configuration of the royal village itself. A notable who can be equally found in many regional courts (although this is not the case

²⁹ Lit.: "mother of the child".

³⁰ Hoover indeed defines the *Namwaan* as "a sub-chief of the *Rukonkish*" (1976).

of the *Mukaciland*'s) is the *Kanampumb*. Various major *ayilol* living at the capital are also assisted by their own *Kanampumb* whose role is to sit on the respective *cilol*'s throne during the interregnum (the period which lies between two incumbents of an office). The role of the *Kanampumb* as *nvubu* of a *cilol* is, thus, homologous to that of the major *cilol* entitled *Sakawaat Kanampumb* at the king's court.

Besides *anvubu*, the *Mukaciland* has his own *atubung* who invest him in office. In the present time they are two in number: the *Mwiin Mpat*³¹ and the *Mukendj*, the former being the senior *kabung* who chooses the incumbents for the office of *Mukaciland*. He was the trustee (*nshir-a-ngand*) of the original lands at Ibwaaz and Ipesh where the *Mukaciland* formerly lived and is considered a *ngaak* (grandfather/ancestor) of the *Mukaciland*. The *Mukendj* assumes the role of *Mwiin Mpat*'s assistant.

The place these *atubung* occupy in relation to the head *cilol* is of great significance. In the village *citentam*, for instance, they sit next to the *Mukaciland* on his right hand side, a position which reproduces that of the *Nswaan Murund* in Musumb. Representing at the court the great *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav*, this female notable sits in audience next to the king, also on his right, and the quarters she and her people occupy in the capital are similarly located. Interestingly enough the *Mwiin Mpat*, the senior among the *Mukaciland*'s *atubung*, is considered, in perpetual kinship, the *Mukaciland*'s official *mwaad* (first wife) which, once again, recalls the symbolic relationship of alliance which, at the royal court, links the *Nswaan Murund* to the Ruwund king. Likewise, the house of the *Mwiin Mpat* is a *fixed* residence next to the chief's palace, on the *right* hand side (house no.22), which is also the location of the ward attributed to him (although rather displaced due to the unusual distribution of the *Nswaan Mulapu*'s quarters, cf.

³¹ *Mwiin Mpat* means "he of the *mpat*", referring to the original land (*mpat*) at Ipesh, one of the ancestral sites where the Aruwund originated.

supra:168,n.28). Finally, it should be remarked that village chiefs avoid having a big *mazemb* for it is there, at the rear of a *cilol*'s palace, that conspiracies are believed to originate. As a matter of fact in Ciland, as in so many other small regional courts, there is no *mazemb* whatsoever, for the *Mwiin Mpat*, considered the *ngaak* of the *Mukaciland*, represents, within the village space, the authority of the Ruwund ancestors.

The non-arbitrary nature of the dignitaries' positioning in courts other than the *Mwant Yaav*'s shows that Ciland - taken as a mere illustration of a regional court - conforms to an organization similar to that which organizes nobles at the capital³². As in other outlying settlements ruled by *ayilol*, the *Mukaciland*'s body of nobles maintain a set of perpetual kinship relations which appear to be basic in Ruwund symbolic thought and characterize these people's ideological understanding of kingship. In Ciland, the organization of the houses within the village space reiterates this ideology, if in a manner which lacks the definition and explicitness with which it is represented at the king's court. When looking at the location of the dwellings of the *Mukaciland*'s nobles in the geography of the village, we soon realize that despite the many elements which give it a specific configuration, the structural logic is, nevertheless, preserved and duly codified. Thus the house of the senior *kabung Mwiin Mpat*, representing the ancestral owners of that land, has a fixed location *on the right* of the chief's palace while the *Namwaan*, the *maaku* of the *Mukaciland* and therefore an official symbolically engaged in his rule, has

³² Beyond what concerns the distribution of the nobles constituting the *Mukaciland*'s court, the whole village of Ciland seems to draw important and clear spatial distinctions. Two among the great *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* (the *Nswaan Mwiiz* and the *Cipwaapu Kalaw*) reside at Ciland. It is meaningful that they chose to build their residences (no.86 and no.70 in *Figure 7*, respectively) in sites located in recent parts of the village and therefore far away from the public courtyard (*diibur*), the center associated to the *Mukaciland* and his court of subordinate dignitaries. Curious also is the location of the *Mwant Karung*'s house (no.99), a *cilol* of the *Mwant Yaav* who came to live at Ciland. Being of the same rank as the *Mukaciland* himself, he installs his residence at the edge of the village, in a site which he himself clears in the bush, thus eradicating any idea of dependency towards the *Mukaciland*.

her dwelling *on the left*. Their relationship of symmetry in the village space of Ciland indeed reproduces and has an homologous meaning to that opposing, at the king's court, the *Nswaan Murund* to the *Rukonkish*. On the other hand, the place taken by both the *atubung* of the *Mukaciland* in the *citentam* (where they sit *close to the cilol*, to his right) reveals, in a most eloquent manner, both the compromise and antagonic character of the two principles on which the idea of leadership among the Aruwund is founded.

I began this chapter by affirming that when placed within the context of the overall political and symbolic organization of the state, Musumb, the capital and the court of the Ruwund sovereign, can be analysed as less of a particular case (as it appears in previous literature) than as merely *the largest court of the greatest of chiefs*. Despite the intricacies and the complexity of the relations defined within its boundaries, the king's village is indeed built upon the same very principles which organize the villages of *ayilol*, the *Mwant Yaav* himself behaving within the system much like one big *cilol* surrounded by his own court of dignitaries.

The study of the spatial interactions among Ruwund nobles fully demonstrated, I believe, how the interweaving of symbolic relationships in both Musumb and the regional courts proceeds from this *one same* ideological rationale. Finer distinctions are indeed conveyed at the royal court where space is "overloaded" with metaphors encoding a maximum range of symbolic oppositions. Nonetheless, the basic perpetual kinship ties and dichotomous relations are, with more or less explicitness, duly represented in outlying villages such as Ciland. From this, however, it should not be understood that regional courts are *simplified forms* of the royal settlement taken as a model upon which they are built, but rather that both peripheral courts and the capital emerge from a *common* symbolic framework of thought. Just like many subtleties of the ideological system are

irrelevant when deprived of their royal setting³³ also not all relationships and perpetual ties linked to a particular *cilol*'s oral history are pertinent, or have a counterpart, at Musumb.

³³ As I have argued elsewhere (1989:547), the dualism of the two "queen-mothers", for instance, is unique to the *Mwant Yaav*'s court as their symbolic meaning can only be affirmed within the set of relationships these two female dignitaries maintain with the sovereign himself and with reference to the precise oral history of his own regal title.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAKING OF A KING I

A description of the royal installation ritual

This chapter aims to present a detailed description of the king's investiture ritual whose analysis will be undertaken in the chapter that follows (ch. VII). After a lengthy introduction of the great *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* and their specific roles as the king's ritual investors, I shall proceed to an account of the ceremony itself which takes place at the sacred lands of the Nkalaany River. In pursuing this description, however, I will suggest that the royal installation ceremony should be considered within a wider context of similar procedures carried out in the investiture of minor chiefs (*ayilol*). In fact, in the installation of a *cilol*, like in the *Mwant Yaav*'s enthronement rite, it is the land trustees representing the forebearers of the locality (the minor *atubung* or *atushiiw*) who serve as the investors of their chiefs, endowing them with the sacred regalia of their office. Hence, the ritual installers are in this case also, just like in the royal ritual, dignitaries whose autochthonous origin is fully recognized. On these grounds I shall propose (section II) that we look together at these minor rites and the king's more elaborate ceremonies. The implications of such an approach are taken further in the following chapter in which royal ritual will be considered within a larger network of various other rites which affect commoners as well as nobles in Ruwund society.

I

The King's Investors

The *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav*, the ritual installers of the sovereign, represent the original chiefs who, under Ruwej's authority, ruled the land of the Aruwund in the times which preceded the arrival of the foreign hunter and the foundation of the new state. Assuming the autochthonous primitive authority, they claim a close link to the two foremost ancestors of the Aruwund, Iyaal-a-Mwaaku and Kaband-a-Mwaaku, sons/descendants (*aan*) of Mwaaku (cf. *supra:Figure 1*)¹. Their link to these ancestors is by *direct* descentance, what the Aruwund stress by saying that they belong to the *diivumu* (nuclear family) of Iyaal or that of Kaband.

It was from Iyaal that Ruwej received the *rukan*, the symbol of the chiefly power. The oral traditions recount that, despite being the eldest among Mwaaku's sons, Kabang was a very feeble child and, consequently, chieftainship was transmitted to the youngest of the two, Iyaal. Descendant of Iyaal, Ruwej would, in turn, inherit the *rukan* from her father Nkond. The princess ruled with the help of her sibling/cousins (*anamaaku*) and this is still the perpetual tie which links the *atubung* to the *Nswaan Murund*, heiress of Ruwej, nowadays. Hence the *atubung* are thought of as belonging to the generation of Ruwej herself although we should bear in mind, as remarked earlier, that the system of perpetual kinship confers great fluidity to the generations since time periods may be collapsed (cf. *supra:ch.III*).

The term *kabung* (sing. of *atubung*) derives from *ubung*, a noun meaning "the action carried out in the installation of a chief". Hence, although representing, ideologically, the ancestral and unassimilated order of Ruwej, the designation of *atubung*,

¹ "Iyaal-a-Mwaaku" can be translated as "Iyaal of Mwaaku", meaning "Iyaal, *mwaan* (child/descendant) of Mwaaku".

paradoxically enough, implies a certain degree of compliance to the *new* system associated with the arrival of Cibind Yirung. In fact, the term *only gains significance* within this new order and in view of their ritual role as the king's installers (cf. *supra*:130). Indeed, only those among Ruwej's *anamaaku* who submitted to the new rule became *atubung*, the closest among these relatives (Cingud, Cinyam, Ndondj and Karumbu, the direct descendants of Nkond, said to be Ruwej's real brothers and sister) having emigrated as a refusal of the foreigner's rule (cf. *supra*:39-40).

Prior to the foreigner's arrival, those who later became known as *atubung* (in view of their *new* task as the king's installers) were merely addressed as Ruwej's *anamaaku*² and held specific office titles which were bestowed upon them according to their attributes and the tasks they were in charge of carrying out in the original village of Ruwej, Kasal Katok. It is claimed that originally there were only six *atubung* holding the titles of *Mukarusong*, *Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb*, *Caawut Ibond*, *Mwiin Cipet*, *Mwant Kayombu* and *Siiyaav Kadimb* respectively. As the population increased, however, new titles were given by Ruwej (or by incumbents of this name) to others among her close relatives. Indeed at the time of my fieldwork, twenty one offices of *kabung* could be recalled although three had then disappeared for lack of adequate successors. The *atubung* in office were, therefore, eighteen in number, all of them living in villages along the Nkalaany area, considered as the Ruwund original homeland.

Although the *atubung* profess an ideology of equality and minimize distinctions among them (cf. *supra*:122-3), particular kinship or genealogical links between titles or else specific events in the respective title traditions originate closer solidarity between sets

² They are also referred to as Ruwej's *ampaanyend* (her brothers/male cousins) despite the fact that one of the *atubung* represents a female title (that of *Kazamb*) and therefore the wider kinship term *anamaaku* (siblings/cousins) would be more adequate. Originally, however, the *atubung* are said to have been fewer and all male, the reason why the former kinship term would have been generalised, in this way stressing the *undifferentiated character* of the link which ties the *atubung* to Ruwej.

of *atubung* who appear to group themselves in an informal sort of manner. Hence the Aruwund may say that such and such *kabung* belong to the same *cisak*, "group", the use of the term *cisak* being in itself elucidative as to the nature of these entities. It is mainly (perpetual) kinship solidarities which are at stake here, for the term *cisak* designates one's kindred in its broadest sense. Indeed a *kabung* is grouped with others among the *atubung* with whom he maintains closer genealogical affinities (and, consequently, to whom his title is associated in episodes recounted by the oral traditions). These links are particularly tight between *pairs* of *atubung*, for these chiefs are thought to be "like twins" and therefore are grouped, first of all, in sets of two. Problems concerning one *kabung* are often discussed with the other of the same pair, and when a new candidate is to be appointed for a title of *kabung*, it is the incumbent of the pairing title who will keep the insignia (the *rukan*) of the deceased and be responsible for the choice of a new successor to the office. The latter is appointed from among the kindred (*cisak*) of all (previous or present) incumbents of the title in question following a criterion of *seniority*: priority is given to the older among the *anamaaku* (sibling/cousins) of the deceased (or of previous incumbents of the same title) and only if these refuse is the position offered to *aan* or *iipu* (children/nieces/nephews or their cousins) and, eventually, to *ijikur* (grandchildren and their cousins) of any present or former holder of the office.

Once chosen a successor to a title, it is the *atubung* belonging to the same *cisak* (and therefore closely related to that title in terms of perpetual kinship) who are expected to participate in the healing ceremony (v: *kulap*) which allows the new incumbent to wear, for the first time, the *rukan* of his office. Other *atubung* who do not belong to the same "group" can be equally present at the ceremony if they so wish. Should the holder of a pairing title be absent from Nkalaany or should that office lack an incumbent at the time, it is other members of the same *cisak* who will proceed to the choice and investiture of

a successor to an office.

These groups, which appear to emerge clearly in such occasions as the death or investiture of a *kabung*, pass completely unnoticed otherwise as, in all other circumstances, distinctions seem to fade completely. In trying to make the solidarities between *atubung* clearer to me, however, it was also claimed that, in older times, a *kabung* would only consume food with others belonging to the same *cisak*. This opinion was not shared by all. Following the ideological strive for equality which characterizes the *atubung*, some strongly denied such assertion and in fact, nowadays, all *atubung* can eat together. The *yisak* (pl. of *cisak*) of *atubung* can thus be said to constitute a rather "informal" sort of grouping for, despite the fact that they reveal closer kinship and genealogical ties among titles (expressed in terms of tighter solidarity), they claim no prerogatives which are not equally shared by the *atubung* outside the *cisak*. It is in this sense that one should understand such groupings, by reference to which we shall next introduce the *atubung*.

The *Mukarusong* and the *Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb*

The *atubung* holding the titles of *Mukarusong*, *Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb*, *Caawut Ibond*, *Kapor Mukum* and *Siiyaav Kadimb* constitute a group (*cisak*) and therefore, as explained previously, form a kind of close circle as far as their investiture is concerned. Hence, when a new incumbent is to occupy one of these offices it is the remaining *atubung* of the group who will heal (v.: *kulap*) the successor to the title in a ceremony taking place inside a seclusion hut, the *masas*. Within this group, however, tighter solidarities are still claimed between pairs of *atubung* such as, for instance, between the *Mukarusong* and the *Caawut Yaav*, both functioning as healers (*angang*) in the royal installation ceremony. The *Caawut Ibond*, who is understood to be an "assistant" of the

Caawut Yaav and lived with the latter and the *Mukarusong* at the original village of Karuwund Kakemp, claims solidarity with this pair of *atubung*. Again, a particularly close link also unites the *Kapor Mukum* to his *mwiipu* (uterine nephew/female cousin's child), the *Mwant Rumang* who, being in fact a *cilol*, has many privileges of *kabung*. To this latter pair is associated the *Siiyaav Kadimb*, a *mwaan* (son/nephew) of the *Mwant Rumang*.

The *atubung* acknowledge the *kabung* entitled *Mukarusong* to be their senior. This seniority, however, does not imply any kind of hierarchical rank, but is merely some kind of "remark" as to the fact that he is the person responsible for the main ritual action at the royal investiture, that of healing the future *Mwant Yaav* with the medicine called *malap* (cf. *infra*:214). This healing power is traced to an episode recounted by Ruwund oral traditions:

One day, Ruwej was very ill for she had not observed the interdictions to which a chief is obliged to conform. A diviner was consulted and prescribed a medicine until then unknown to the Aruwund, the *malap*. The *Mukarusong* was entrusted with the mission of going to a neighbouring village to learn about this medicine from the *Mayengil* (today a *kabung* of the *cilol Mwant Itaj*) who had brought it in from a foreign land. On his return the *Mukarusong* succeeds in healing Ruwej and, subsequently, when the first *Mwant Yaav* came into power, he was charged with performing this very same healing action at a king's enthronement ceremony.

In this task the *Mukarusong* is assisted by the *kabung* with the title of *Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb*. It is believed that, in older times, the *Mukarusong* would have entrusted the secret of the *malap* to his *mwiipu* (uterine nephew/female cousin's child), *Yaav-a-Kayemb*, on one occasion in which, having both gone on a journey to Celek wa Ngoy-a-Nsong, the *Mukarusong* became seriously ill (and eventually died). It is claimed that, on

his return to the Nkalaany, the *Caawut Yaav* had refused to hand the *malap* and its secret back to the descendants (*aan*) of the *Mukarusong*. This is the reason why, being both responsible for the ritual healing (v.: *kulap*) of the future *Mwant Yaav*, it is, in fact, the *Caawut Yaav* who actually prepares the medicine and applies it during the ceremony. Nonetheless, he can only play his role of healer (*ngang*) in the presence and under the instructions of the *Mukarusong*, for this *kabung* is the *Caawut Yaav*'s *mantu* (maternal uncle)³ and, therefore, the senior (*mukurump*) of the two. The solidarity between the *Mukarusong* and the *Caawut Yaav*, sharing a role as healers at the royal investiture ritual, is thus cemented by a close perpetual kinship tie. In fact they both trace their genealogy to the same ancestor, *Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz*, a descendant of *Kaband-a-Mwaaku*⁴.

But the fluidity of oral traditions, as has been remarked at length, allows room for negotiating versions and claiming statuses by converting to the benefit of one's office the

³ The term *mantu* includes any maternal *maaku*'s brother/male cousin.

⁴ It is said that *Kayemb*, the father of *Yaav-a-Kayemb*, would have married a woman who was a *mpaanyend* (sister/cousin) of *Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz*. Their child, *Yaav*, was therefore the latter's *mwiipu*. Having succeeded *Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz*, the *Mukarusong* inherits the perpetual kinship relation towards *Yaav-a-Kayemb* (the first holder of the title of *Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb*) which his ancestor held before him.

Some informants claim that the *Mukarusong* was a direct descendant of *Mwiiz-a-Mwambu*, a *mwaan-kanc* (younger sibling/cousin) of *Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz*. This is indeed confirmed by the praise of the *Mukarusong*'s office:

*Mwiiz-a-Mwambu, iikuuny wabula kabung,
ez akamukwaat ngwaad, kavuzu cambaken*

"*Mwiiz-a-Mwambu*, the man who made the little string
[with which] came and trapped the bird *ngwaad* and then the bird
kavuzu".

(*Kabung* is here a diminutive of *mubung* (pl.: *mibung*), "rope, string". Tones differ from *kabûng* (pl.: *atubûng*), the ancestral chiefs. The *ngwaad* and the *kavuzu* are two birds which a chief can only consume inside his private kitchen, alone or with other chiefs also compelled to eat in seclusion).

However, being a *mwaan* of *Mwiiz-a-Mwambu*, the *Mukarusong* is, according to Ruwund kinship terminology, also a *mwaan* of *Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz*. Indeed, following a common process in Ruwund oral traditions (cf. *supra*:56), *Mwiiz-a-Mwambu* fades, in many accounts, in favour of his older sibling/cousin *Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz* who, having succeeded to the power of *Kaband-a-Mwaaku*, is the most prominent of the two ancestors.

threads left somehow blurred or undefined by the system of perpetual kinship. A counterpart of the version mentioned above illustrates this point. In fact, it is equally claimed (this time by the present incumbent of the title of *Caawut Yaav* as well as by other informants) that the *Caawut Yaav* (and not the *Mukarusong*) would have received the secret of the *malap* directly from their common ancestor, Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz. In this variant the same story of the trip to Celək wa Ngoy-a-Nsong is told, the *Caawut Yaav* accompanying his *mantu*, this time the very ancestor Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz, who subsequently dies, leaving the *malap* and the *rukan* to his *mwiipu*. Arrived back at Karuwund Kakemp, the village of Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz, the *Caawut Yaav* refuses to give the medicine to the legitimate successor and eldest *mwaan* of the deceased chief, namely the *Mukarusong*, arguing that the latter had chosen not to accompany his *taat'uku* (father/uncle) on the journey and therefore had no right to claim the chiefly insignia or else the secret of the *malap*.

The two versions, apparently dissonant, can be merged when we think that, being the successor of Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz, the *Mukarusong* represents, by the system of positional succession and perpetual kinship, Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz himself and, therefore, the *Caawut Yaav* is both the *Mukarusong*'s and his ancestor's *mwiipu*. In either version, however, the healing power is taken to have been *unduly* seized by the *Caawut Yaav* as it is indeed conveyed by the praise-phrase of his office:

*Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb cimbambanseng,
diiyaal da ciikul-a-mbaw*

"*Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb* who seized hold of the buffalo horn,
the rock where the buffalo comes to scratch"

The power of the *Caawut Yaav* as a healing specialist resides in the buffalo horn (containing a set of medicines) which he took from Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz or from his successor,

the *Mukarusong*. The term *cimbambanseng* (from *kubamb*, "to conquer, to seize hold by force" and *museng*, "horn") refers precisely to the way in which these fetishes fell "unduely" in the hands of the *Caawut Yaav*. This *kabung* is said to be like the rock where the buffalo comes regularly to scratch ("stone of *ciikul-a-mbaw*", from *kwiikul*, "to scratch" and *mbaw*, "plains buffalo") for, much like the buffalo who always goes back to the same site to scratch, all dignitaries possessing a *rukan* have to resort to the *Caawut Yaav* to be invested with the power of their offices. Only the *Caawut Yaav* holds the secret of the medicine with which a chief with *rukan* has to be healed at his installation ceremony and, therefore, it is from him that minor *atubung* learn the *malap* in order to install their respective *ayilol*. For this, in fact, they owe payment to the *Caawut Yaav* or to any other *kabung* who might have already acquired the *malap*.

Following the episode of transmission of the *malap* there were serious disputes between the *Caawut Yaav* and the most direct descendants (*aan*) of Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz. As a result the *Caawut Yaav*, always in possession of the healing secrets, abandons Karuwund Kakemp (his and the *Mukarusong*'s original settlement) for the village of his relative, the *Kapor Mukum*. Later, however, he is said to have returned to Karuwund Kakemp and re-established his relationship with his *mantu*, the *Mukarusong*, to whom, as the legitimate successor of Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz, he gives their ancestor's *rukan* (or, according to other accounts, for whom he makes a new *rukan*). Thereafter they shared the role of healers in the king's installation ritual even though it is the *Caawut Yaav* who, in practice, is the healing specialist during the ceremony.

Karuwund Kakemp (lit.: "a few Aruwund"/"small Ruwund person"), the village of Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz (and subsequently that of the *Mukarusong*) was just a small settlement when they first established it but one from which a great part of the Ruwund population originated and expanded. The title of "*Mukarusong*", which is for some informants derived

from the verb *kusong* ("to grow, to sprout"), alludes to this fact. The etymology of the title, however, was also traced to the noun *rufu ra nsong* ("murder") arguing that he was so called because his ancestor Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz had been murdered.

The *Caawut Ibond*

Another descendant of Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz, Mukur-a-Kapel (who would later become the first *Caawut Ibond*) inhabited with the *Caawut Yaav* and the *Mukarusong* at the ancestral village of Karuwund Kakemp. The story of this title recounts that there was a big party one day involving a lot of people and on which occasion they needed to kill a goat or a sheep. The people present got hold of some branches to hit the animal with but Mukur stopped them and, holding the animal with his bare hands, broke its neck. He was, thereafter, known as *Caawut Ibond* (from verb *kubond*, "to kill by twisting the neck, to strangle", also "to ambush", according to Hoover, 1976). His role in the investiture of the Ruwund sovereign was, in former times, to kill a human sacrificial victim in order to extract the tendons which would be added to the *rukan* (by the *Caawut Yaav*) at every installation ceremony. The office of *Caawut Ibond* is indeed understood as that of an assistant to the *Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb* with whom (as well as the *Mukarusong*) he maintains close perpetual kinship ties.

The *Kapor Mukum* and the *Mwant Rumang*

The three previous *atubung* claim solidarity with the *Kapor Mukum*, who is no longer a *kabung*, and the *Mwant Rumang* who, being a *cilol*, enjoys some prerogatives of *kabung*. They all belong to the same *cisak* ("group") and, as descendants of Kaband-a-Mwaaku, claim close genealogical ties. Again, some episodes in the oral traditions link the *Mukarusong* and the *Caawut Yaav* to the *Kapor Mukum* and his *mwiipu* (uterine

nephew/female cousin's child), the *Mwant Rumang*. As a matter of fact, in the sequence of the disputes raised by the *Caawut Yaav*'s seizing hold of the *malap* (cf. *supra*:182), this *kabung* abandons Karuwund Kakemp to seek refuge in the village of the *Kapor Mukum*, his relative who lived together with the *Mwant Rumang*.

The *Kapor Mukum* was a *kabung* until recent times, although he did not hold a *rukan* for, as the story of his title recounts, he renounced the bracelet in favour of his child, Mutombu, whom, on one occasion, he sent to the royal court to heal the *Mwant Yaav*. *Kapor* was a well-known healer but he refrained from going himself to Musumb to heal the sovereign for he was the *mantu* of the *Mwant Rumang*, the former consort of Ruwej (cf. *supra*:52-3), and therefore an unsuccessful healing could be understood as resulting from conspiracy with his *niwiipu* against the king. The *Kapor Mukum* thus decided to send his son instead, who would become the king's official healer (holding the title of *Waan-a-Mutombu*). Wanting to give his child greater respectability, the *kabung* hands him his own *rukan*. In recent years the last incumbent of the office of *Kapor Mukum* gave up the title.

The *Kapor Mukum*'s role as *kabung* (and since he renounced his powers of healer in favour of his son) was to prepare the road for the king when travelling. For this he would cut a heavy tree called *mupor*⁵ - hence his name of "Kapor" - and press the grass down with it as the royal retinue advanced. Furthermore, he was in charge of building the king's residence in temporary encampments for which he would use this same tree. At the king's investiture he would supply the branches to build the structure of the healing hut (*masas*) and, at the end of the installation ceremony, it was his ritual duty to blow white kaolin to the *Mwant Yaav* as a "blessing" and to wish him luck on his journey back to

⁵ Tree belonging to the *Liliaceae* family (identified for the zone of Kahemba as *Smilax kraussiana*, cf. de Boeck, 1991:478).

Musumb.

As for the *Mwant Rumang*, he represents the male companion of Ruwej before Cibind Yirung's arrival whom the princess abandoned in favour of the Luba hunter and whom, as a consequence, left Ruwund homeland to become a chief (*cilol*) elsewhere, in Sandoa zone. Although a *cilol*, the *Mwant Rumang* was a close *mwanaamaaku* of Ruwej - their relationship was seen as an incestuous alliance (cf. *supra*:82) - and therefore preserves some of the prerogatives of *kabung*. He and the *Mukaciland* are the only *ayilol* who, on official occasions, can parade together with the *atubung* in the presence of the sovereign. The *Mwant Rumang* is said to be the *atubung*'s *cijik*, a *cijik* being a child born after twins, for he is one "who comes just after" the *atubung*, considered to be like twins (cf. *supra*:125). In fact he takes the end of the line when the *atubung* march before the sovereign and sits just behind them in the public meetings. Again, the *Mwant Rumang* does not owe the king payment of tribute (as do all other *ayilol*) and, although his insignia are generally those of a *cilol*, he holds a *mukombu* (wooden walking-stick), a symbol of ancestry, and salutes the *atubung* as if he was one among them, with a left hand shake. Moreover, despite the fact that he is to greet the *Mwant Yaav* as any other *cilol* with hands clapping (v.: *kwiifukwiil*), he should never prostrate himself on the ground (v.: *kubumburik*) as he represents the ancient order of the Nkalaany and, in particular, the earlier consort of Ruwej. As a result of this - and contrarily to all other *ayilol* of the area - , the *Mwant Rumang* will not participate in the preparations of the royal installation rite and under no circumstance should he see the successor to the throne inside the healing hut during the investiture.

The *Siiyaav Kadimb*

The title of "Siiyaav Kadimb" has to do with this *kabung*'s ritual performance as

a "corpse" in the king's investiture ceremony. The *Siiyaav Kadimb* pretends (v.: *kudimban*) to be dead in the sequence of having become impure (as described *infra*:221). Further, this *kabung* is the guardian (*kalam*) of the rear entrance of the hut where the king is healed during the investiture ceremony at the Nkalaany. Whenever the heir or his first wife, the *Mwaad*, needs to come out of the seclusion hut, it is the *Siiyaav* who is to accompany them. Some claimed that it is also his duty to fetch the palm wine which the *Mwant Yaav* is to offer the *atubung* for the healing ceremony and hand it into the *masas*. The ritual takes a full night and the wine will be shared by the *atubung* and other interveners in the healing. This role of the *Siiyaav*'s is understood to be carried out on behalf of the *Mwant Rumang* who, being a rival of the *Mwant Yaav* (for he is Ruwej's former spouse), could not be entrusted the mission of handling the wine for fear of poisoning it or rendering it improper. The *Siiyaav* is a *mwaan* of the *Mwant Rumang* whom the latter would have appointed to perform this task on his behalf, and this explains the particularly close relationship which links them, among the *atubung* of this *cisak*.

The *Mwiin Cipet* and the *Mwant Kayombu*

One other *cisak* is constituted by the *atubung* entitled *Mwiin Cipet* and *Mwant Kayombu*. Within the Ruwund symbolic system, the *Mwiin Cipet* represents Iyaal-a-Mwaaku, the youngest son of Mwaaku to whom the ancestral bracelet was entrusted. The first incumbent of the office of *Mwiin Cipet* was a *mwaan* (son/descendant) of Iyaal-a-Mwaaku who replaced the latter as chief at Piiyaal-a-Rubemb, a village which the Aruwund came to inhabit after having emerged from the original cave. He was given the title of *Mwiin Cipet* (meaning *mwiin kupep*, "he who lights the fire") for, among all descendants of Iyaal-a-Mwaaku, he alone succeeded in lighting the fire in Ruwej's *malal* which, inadvertently, had gone out. Later, as a *kabung* of the *Mwant Yaav*, the *Mwiin*

Cipet's main role in the king's installation ritual became that of lighting the first fire in the kitchen (*malal*) of the new sovereign (cf. *infra*:220).

The *Mwant Kayombu*, considered the *Mwiin Cipet*'s *mwaan-kanc* (younger brother/cousin), is the *kalaal* (lit.: "he who does not sleep", from *kulaal*, "to sleep") of the *atubung*, that is, he who walks in front whenever the *atubung* march together on a ritual occasion. He is not seen as a leader or, for that matter, a senior among the *atubung*. His vanguard position is due to the fact that he should always precede his fellows in order to explore the way and ensure a safe journey to the *atubung* whenever they leave Nkalaany on an official visit to Musumb or in any other ritual event.

The *Sakapemb* and the *Ngwaad-a-Ciying*

Kasal Katok, the ancestral village where Ruwej resided, was located in the territory (*cipak*) of the *Sakapemb*, the land trustee of that area. It was there that "it became light" (cf. *supra*:35,n.4) and there also that the sun is said to rise. (This site is referred to as *kwingandjel kwa Sakapemb* as it is located by the Ngandjel River where the sun was seen to rise, the reason why *kwingandjel* came to mean "in the east/where the sun dawns"). Indeed it was at the land of the *Sakapemb* that Cibind Yirung first arrived and kingship/chieftainship subsequently originated (cf. *supra*:48). The new "political" order is thus associated to the rising sun and thus, the traditions recount, the Aruwund talked of the times when the population dispersed and left this original site by saying: *kwingandjel kwasunz kal* ("at the Ngandjel/in the east the sun has set").

The *Sakapemb* was, in former times, in charge of guarding two ancestral wells located in his lands: the well from which Nkond-a-Matit, Ruwej's father, drunk water (*diijiy da malap*, "the well of the *malap*") and that of his ancestral spirit called Nacivaadin (*diijiy da Nacivaadin*). The *Sakapemb* was responsible for taking the water from the first

well and bring it to Nkond (and later to Ruwej when she became chief), and for making offerings to the ancestral spirit at the second well. In order to carry out these ritual tasks he had to rub his entire body with white kaolin (*mpemb*) for which he was named *Sakapemb*⁶.

On the occasion of a king's investiture ritual the *Sakapemb* - who, like all other *atubung*, is now settled between the Nkalaany and Kajidij Rivers - is to travel to his original lands to the east of the Kajidij and bring to the site of enthronement water from the ancestral well (*dijiy da malap*). Dressed with the white muslin cloth of a *kabung* and his insignia of power, the *Sakapemb* rubs kaolin all over his body and leaves for the site of the ancestral wells near the ancient village of Kasal Katok. First he is to go to the well of Nacivaadin and present the spirit with a white goat. Then, in the well of the *malap*, he makes the offer of a white chicken and evokes his ancestor, Nkond-a-Matit. This should render the water clear and pure. The *kabung* then fills a calabash and returns to Nkalaany chanting the licentious songs of twinship (songs of *ubwang*) accompanied by the rhythmic ringing of a bell. This water will be given to the *Caawut Yaav*, the healer at the king's investiture ritual, to be used in the preparation of the medicine called *malap* with which the *Mukarusong* and the *Caawut Yaav* will heal the heir to the throne.

The *Sakapemb* pairs with the *Ngwaad*, their close link resulting from an alliance relationship undertaken by two of their descendants. The myth of state foundation recounts that it was the *kabung Ngwaad-a-Ciyang*⁷ who first met Cibind Yirung when, having gone one day to the forest to collect his calabash of palm wine, he finds out that some strangers had drunk from it (cf. *supra*:38-9). Having accompanied their leader, the Luba hunter

⁶ My informants (some among the *atubung*) were adamant in tracing this title to the white kaolin with which this *kabung* is to rub himself (*kapemb* being a diminutive of *mpemb*) and insisted that it should not be understood as "Father of Kapemb" as Hoover suggests, 1978b:640,n.22).

⁷ For the meaning of this title cf. *supra*:87.

Cibind Yirung, to the village of Kasal Katok, the *Ngwaad* seizes hold of the stranger's bow (which represented his strength) thus rendering him harmless (cf. *supra*:47-8). This bow was kept by the *kabung* as evidence that he was the first to meet the foreigner and, at a king's installation, the *Ngwaad* presents himself before the new sovereign exhibiting the bow and claiming payment (cf. *infra*:222-3).

The *Nfarukind* and the *Capalik Kazamb*

These two *atubung* are linked by a relationship of alliance, the *Capalik Kazamb*, a female *kabung*, being considered the "wife" of the *Nfarukind*. Since they are seen as spouses, their lines of descent are traced separately: the *Kazamb* recognises herself as a direct descendant of Iyaal-a-Mwaaku while the *Nfarukind* traces his genealogy to Kaband-a-Mwaaku. The title of *Nfarukind* was given to Mbay for having built a fish trap (*rukind*) near the rapids of Kayong where he settled. It was a major enterprise and many people died in the process. One day, while travelling, the *Nfarukind* arrives at the village of Makezu where the *Capalik Kazamb* lived. The *Kazamb* was a single woman who had left the place of her *mwanaaaku* (sibling/cousin), the *Ngwaad*, to install a settlement of her own. The *Nfarukind* tells the *Kazamb* of the hardship in his own village where people so often died while trapping fish and, marrying the *Kazamb*, finally settles at Makezu.

Makezu, the name of the *Kazamb*'s village, was also the name of the spirits she worshipped. There were two *makezu* (sing.: *diikezu*) represented by two *miyombu* (sing.: *muyombu*)⁸, the latter being sacred trees which are often planted to evoke one's male

⁸ Tree belonging to the *Amnacardiaceae* family (de Boeck identifies it for the zone of Kahemba as *Lennea antiscorbutica*, cf. 1991:479).

ancestors. The one on the right the *Kazamb*⁹ attributed to the *Nfarukind* and the one on the left remained her own. These trees represent the ancestors of both the *atubung* who actually have a common praise-phrase:

*mwaan a makezu, makezu maad,
diikwaaw da Nfarukind*

"Child/descendant of the *makezu*, the two *makezu*,
the other [is] *Nfarukind*'s".

On the occasion of the king's installation ritual these two *atubung* are to travel to Makezu (on the east river bank of the Kajidij), render homage to these *akish* (spirits; sing.: *mukish*)¹⁰ and cut a trunk of a *muyombu* (of approx. 1,5m long) which they transport to the Nkalaany wrapped in a white muslin cloth as if it were a dead body (*mufu*), for it represents a deceased ancestor. They travel back at night so that no one sees them and, arrived at the site of the investiture, plant the *muyombu* which the heir to the throne will later embrace in order to receive the power and strength of these ancestors (cf. *infra*:224).

The *Ijimb* and the *Kiizal*

Both originating from the village of Mwant Kandal, these *atubung* trace their origin to a common ancestor (*ngaak*), Kada-ni-aeny, a descendant of Iyaal-a-Mwaaku.

They are thus very closely related (what the Aruwund convey by saying that they are "the

⁹ "Kazamb" is said by some to have been a christian name originally. Other informants, however, trace the title to an episode in which, being ill, the *kabung* was treated at the *makezu* (in this account described as two holes on the ground which communicated forming a cave) by making her descent into the cave through one entrance (*kupalik*, "to fall", hence "Capalik") and coming out by the other ("Kazamb" would derive from *kuzambul*, "to lift up").

¹⁰ The single term "mukish" is employed both to mean "the spirit of a deceased ancestor" and to refer to elements of nature or shrines which represent it. To worship a *mukish* includes various ritual actions. First, one should clear and sweep around the tree/stone (or other) which represents the spirit, an action which is referred to as *kuriyek*(v.) *mukish*. Then offerings are made (v.: *kupesh*) and the ancestors invoked (v.: *kukombidiin*).

same people", *antu amwing*). My informants (the present incumbents of these titles) defined their perpetual relationship as that of "cousins" (*anamaaku*). Although the *Kiizal* was the eldest of the two, it is the *Ijimb* who is considered the senior as their office roles are concerned.

According to oral traditions, the chief *Mwant Kandal* sent two of his relatives (the first incumbents of the titles of *Ijimb* and *Kiizal*) to Kasal Katok in order to assist Ruwej. He who later became the first *Ijimb* was sent by the princess to the Nkalaany with the title of *Mwiin Nkalaany* ("he of the Nkalaany"). Once the first capital, designated "Iyikel"¹¹, was built on the east river bank, he was charged with the task of guarding three sacred trees which, at the Nkalaany, represent the spirits of the Ruwund ancestors: the *mudjangam*, the *mulil-a-nkibu* and the *mulemb*¹². At a king's enthronement ritual the *Ijimb* is to clear the grass around these *akish* and invoke the ancestor they represent (this takes place at the *mudjangam*, other trees being considered secondary). Later this ritual specialist will undertake a ceremony during which the heir to the throne, sitting by the *mudjangam*, is given white kaolin and the blessing of the Ruwund ancestors (cf. *infra*:221-2).

The *Ijimb* is also considered the messenger (*katum'atum*) of the *atubung*. When the *Ant Yaav* left Iyikel to build their *misumb* (pl. of *musumb*)¹³ elsewhere, it was the *Ijimb* who would receive the news coming from the court and notify the other *atubung* at

¹¹ Always used with the prefixes *pa-* (*piiyikel*, meaning "at Iyikel") or *mu-* (*mwiiyikel*, "in Iyikel").

¹² This latter tree belongs to the family of the *Moraceae* (*Ficus elastica*, cf. Hoover, 1976). I was unable to find the identification of the other two in the literature.

¹³ "Musumb" appears in small letters whenever it is used as a noun meaning "any village/encampment inhabited by the king" (which actually, in most cases, constituted former capitals of the kingdom). As mentioned previously (*supra*:28,n.8), however, in the case of the current capital which has long become a *fixed* locality, it seemed more appropriate to use "Musumb" as a proper noun, as if referring to the name of a town.

the Nkalaany. Likewise, he was/is in charge of expediting messages from the *atubung* to their sister/cousin (*mwanaamaaku*) Ruwej, represented at the royal village by the *Nswaan Murund*.

The title of "Ijimb", however, relates to this *kabung*'s other role in the royal installation ritual which, in older times, was that of keeping the human tendons extracted from a sacrificial victim by the *Caawut Ibond* and drying them. The tendons were then given to the *Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb* who, during the healing ceremony at a king's installation, would add them to the sovereign's ancestral bracelet. Some informants claimed that the title of "Ijimb" is a concealed way of saying "yiijimb", a term which designates the parts of the game which only the hunter himself with his family (*diivumu*) are to consume (such as the heart, head, pancreas, spleen, tail, diaphragm and anus). The *Mwiin Nkalaany* would have been attributed such a title since the human tendons which he guarded resembled the *yijimb* of a hunted animal.

The *Kiizal*¹⁴, also a descendant of the *Mwant Kandal*, is equally in charge of a spirit at Nkalaany, the tree *mukamb*¹⁵, which the *Mwant Yaav* is to embrace during his installation ceremony (cf. *infra*:222). In fact there are four dignitaries responsible for guarding and maintaining the site by the Nkalaany River where the first *musumb* was built, which is also the place where the royal enthronement ritual takes place: the *atubung Ijimb* and *Kiizal*, whose task is to look after the sacred trees representing the Ruwund ancestors, and two *ayilol*, the *Ncakal Makal* and the *Mwant Muyind* whose roles are, respectively, that of guarding the site where the first royal palace and its enclosure (called *cipang ca rupep*) where built and that of maintaining the *cimet*, a small area of raised

¹⁴ The title of *Kiizal* derives, according to my informants, from *nzal* ("oncles") although knowledge of the episodes clarifying the actual meaning of such name is very uncertain.

¹⁵ I was unable to find the identification of this tree in the literature.

ground where the royal throne is placed for the newly invested king to proceed to his first public audience, the *citentam*. These four nobles have their permanent residences at the village of Ncakal Makal, not far from the sacred site of the *musumb* Iyikel which they are to oversee.

The *Kalamiikond* and the *Mwant Kanding*

Tracing his descendance to Iyaal-a-Mwaaku, the *Kalamiikond* is, by the perpetual kinship system, *taat'uku* (father/uncle) of the *Mwant Kanding* and therefore considered the senior of the two. The title of *Kalamiikond* (meaning "he who looks after the banana", from *kulam*, "to look after" and *diikond*, "banana") was bestowed upon Ciish, a *mwaan* of Iyaal-a-Mwaaku, for he succeeded in healing Ruwej resorting, as a medicine, to a particular kind of banana tree (*diikond da mucim-a-ntalal*) which he planted by her house.

Ruwej, oral traditions recount, did not seem to aspire to a husband so a healer had to be sought in order to make her wish a partner who would bring her to bear offspring. It is often said of people lacking warmth of character or sexual responsiveness that they have a *mucim-a-ntalal* ("a cold body/heart", from *kutalal*, "to chill") and thus the designation of this kind of banana, a species which is used exclusively as a healing medicine. The role of the *Kalamiikond* is to present the *Mwant Yaav* with these bananas which the king is to eat inside the *malal* during his investiture¹⁶. It is claimed that this medicine, which also acts on the king's sexuality, will give the *Mwant Yaav* a strong character and allow him to judge situations without fear or hesitation.

Kabaaj, a *mwaan* of the *Kalamiikond*, was often sent by the latter to take all kinds of agricultural produce - in particular manioc (*kanding*), being the staple food - to the

¹⁶ The *Kalamiikond* was also in charge of guarding the entrances of the trenches dug during the war with the Cokwe in the last century.

princess Ruwej (some claim that he was actually the guardian of Ruwej's fields). This became the office role of the *Mwant Kanding* ("Manioc chief") who, in the *Mwant Yaav's* ceremony of enthronement, is to present the newly invested king with a basin containing a sample of various agricultural products symbolizing a kingdom where abundance reigns and no illness or starvation will occur (cf. *infra*:223).

The *Nswaan Mwiiz* and the *Samwaad Kavam*

The *atubung* entitled *Nswaan Mwiiz*, *Samwaad Kavam*, *Sakalend Mwiisaaz*, *Sakabang Masol* and *Cipwaapu Kalaw* constitute a large "kin group" (*cisak*), being all descendants of Kaband-a-Mwaaku. Within this wider group, however, closer ties and solidarities can again be disclosed between pairs of *atubung* such as between the *Nswaan Mwiiz* and the *Samwaad Kavam*, on the one hand, and the *Sakalend Mwiisaaz* and the *Sakabang Masol*, on the other. The *Cipwaapu Kalaw* belongs to the latter pair, for he is seen as an "assistant" of the *Sakalend Mwiisaaz*.

The *Nswaan Mwiiz* and the *Samwaad Kavam* form a pair of *atubung* and trace their origin to the same ancestor, *Mwiiz-a-Mwiiz*, a close descendant of Kaband-a-Mwaaku. Like all the people of Kaband-a-Mwaaku, they lived originally at Ipesh.

The *Nswaan Mwiiz's* task as a ritual specialist in the king's installation is that of supplying the foods which a chief only eats according to certain rules. These foods, generally designated *masany* (sing.: *diisany*), are also used to make the medicine called *malap* which is prepared by the *Caawut Yaav* to heal the heir to the throne at his investiture.

The king and all chiefs with sacred bracelets (*nkan*, pl. of *rukan*) have to refrain from eating in public and, within the seclusion of their kitchens, they should observe a

number of strict rules of commensality enforced upon the *masany*. Failure to comply with the interdictions relating to these foods will lead to illness. The main disease believed to afflict the transgressor in these particular circumstances is leprosy (*misong ya kasu*). During the healing ceremony conducted by the *Caawut Yaav* and the *Mukarusong*, the heir to the royal throne is to get first hand knowledge of these particular foods which are used in the composition of the *malap*. Henceforth their consumption by the sovereign is strictly regulated.

The office of *Samwaad Kavam*, for lack of legitimate successors, is no longer occupied. It is now evoked as a title which has already ceased to exist. This *kabung*, considered a *mwaan-kanc* (younger brother/cousin) of the *Nswaan Mwiiz*, was in charge of building two shrines by the entrance of the royal palace at Iyikel for the *akish* called *atumwaad* (sing: *kamwaad*). The *atumwaad* (and hence the title of *Samwaad*, "he of the *atumwaad*") are spirits of ancestors believed to hinder fertility. Should a diviner detect these spirits as the cause of a patient's barrenness, offerings should be made by the afflicted in order to satisfy the *akish* and reestablish fertility. Before cooking each meal the patient is to place manioc flour by the shrine (so as to feed the ancestral spirits) and, when going to sleep, should make a line with flour linking the shrine to the bed. The role of the *Samwaad* in the king's investiture was to build these shrines and make offerings to the *atumwaad* in food and palm wine (*maruvu ma ntomb*) to ensure that a king's progeny be numerous and the sovereign be a fertile being *par excellence*.

The *Sakalend Mwiisaaz*, the *Sakabang Masol* and the *Cipwaapu Kalaw*

The *Sakalend Mwiisaaz*, the *Sakabang Masol* and the *Cipwaapu Kalaw* form a closely related group (*cisak*) of *atubung*, for they originally lived in the same village and claim very close genealogical ties. All descendants of Kaband-a-Mwaaku, they also hold

particular kinship links with the pair *Nswaan Mwiiz* - *Samwaad Kavam*¹⁷ with whom, as mentioned before, they form a larger group (*cisak*) of *atubung*.

The *Sakalend Mwiisaaz* (for he was often seen cultivating in the marsh, *diisaaz*)¹⁸ used to extract palm wine (*maruvu ma ntomb*) for his sister/cousin Ruwej and bring her *ampur*, the larvae from the same raphia palm tree (*mudid*)¹⁹ considered a delicacy among the Aruwund. In conformity with his traditional task, the role attributed to this *kabung* in the royal investiture is that of supplying the palm wine (*maruvu ma ntomb*) which will be drunk inside the *masas* during the healing ceremony. Formerly he would also provide the *ampur* used as an ingredient in the *malap*. In this, however, the *Sakalend Mwiisaaz* was often assisted by his second, the *Cipwaapu Kalaw*. In recent times the latter becomes an office of *kabung* (by decision of the *Nswaan Murund*)²⁰ and the task of supplying the *ampur* to the healing ceremony was once and for all assigned to this title. Indeed, oral tradition recounts that whenever Kalaw went fishing, hunting or gathering he never failed to present the Ruwund princess with food. These activities of procuring food are generally designated by the verb *kupwaapul* to which the title of *Cipwaapu Kalaw* can be traced.

The *Sakalend Mwiisaaz* pairs with the *Sakabang Masol* - a title which has long ceased for lack of incumbents to take the office - as they are said to be descendants of one same nuclear family (*diivumu*). The *Sakabang Masol*, the youngest of the two, was bestowed this title for it was he who would search (v.: *kubang*) for light firewood (*diisol*, pl.: *masol*, is a tall wild daisy, cf. Hoover, 1976) to give to the princess Ruwej. It was

¹⁷ They are all *anamaaku* of the *Mwiin Irung*, a chief at the Nkalaany area.

¹⁸ *Mwiisaaz* is the contracted form of *mu-* with *diisaaz*, meaning "in the marsh".

¹⁹ A tree of the *Palmae* family (identified for the zone of Kahemba as *Rapiphia vinifera* and *R. hookerii*, cf. de Boeck, 1991:478).

²⁰ I myself still met the first incumbent of the title of *Cipwaapu Kalaw* when it had acquired the status of an office of *kabung*.

suggested to me that this *kabung* was, in former times, in charge of bringing firewood to light the fire inside the healing hut at the royal installation ceremony. Most informants, however, were adamant in affirming that he had no specific role in the king's investiture. Indeed, while it seems plausible that the *Sakabang Masol* had such a task (for all other *atubung* seem to be attributed a specific role in the royal ritual of enthronement), the fact that the title does not exist nowadays (and therefore this task is no longer performed by a *kabung*) might explain why it was often denied that such a role should be attributed to the office of *Sakabang*.

The *Kasaaku*

Descendant of Iyaal-a-Mwaaku, the *Kasaaku*²¹ is the guardian of two *akish* of the *Mwant Yaav* at the Nkalaany River represented by the rock of Kabembil and the rock of Cikomb respectively. Both of these rocks are important ritual sites in the episodes leading to the installation of a king. On this occasion the *Kasaaku* is to offer palm wine (*maruvu ma ntomb*) and white kaolin at the rock of Kabembil in order to evoke the ancestors. In this way he will ensure a safe crossing of the river by the heir to the throne as the latter approaches the ancient *musumb* of Iyikel (cf. *infra*:210-1). The rock of Cikomb, located inside the river waters, is the site where the sovereign's ritual washing will take place (cf. *infra*:219-20).

The *Kasaaku* is the only *kabung* who does not possess a *rukan* (the history of his title recounts that a previous incumbent drowned himself with the bracelet) but can, nonetheless, eat inside the *malal* with other *atubung*. He is also the only *kabung* who does not pair with any other. He maintains, however, close genealogical ties with the *Ijimb*, the

²¹ Although some informants claimed that "Kasaaku" was merely a christian name, others explained the title by reference to the plant called *kasaaku* which this *kabung* was said to cultivate.

Kiizal and the *cilol Ncakal Makal*²² who are responsible for choosing and investing a new *Kasaaku*. Nonetheless, the latter does not assemble with these dignitaries in the manner described for other *atubung*.

II

The enthronement of a new sovereign should be understood in the wider context of the rituals of investiture of the *ayilol* in general²³ for, safeguarding some specificities or different degrees of complexity, they all seem to follow a few common phases and respond to one same symbolic framework. I shall proceed to outline (in a rather schematic manner) these *common* features in the light of which the detailed description of the king's ceremony should be read. Bearing in mind the larger context of the installation rituals of Ruwund chiefs in general, the ceremony of royal enthronement loses, to some extent, its own specificity, raising a controversial issue related to that taken up - although in somewhat different terms - in the following chapter about the relevance of *royal* symbolism as such.

The Ruwund ceremonies of investiture (in the case of the king as well as that of a *cilol* or even of a *nvubu*, a *cilol*'s sub-noble) follow two main stages: the choice of a candidate, an action referred to as *kutond(v.) mwant*, and his/her²⁴ installation as chief, *kudiish(v.) mwant*. Although I shall not detail these ceremonies except for the case of the sovereign himself, I will give the general outline of the phases comprised within these two moments according to the rank of the dignitary being invested.

²² The *Kasaaku*, the *Ijimb* and the *Kiizal* are all descendants of the *Mwant Kandal* (*aan-a-Mwant Kandal*).

²³ The investiture of *atubung* will not be considered here for it differs considerably, although following the same basic symbolic procedure (cf. *supra*:177).

²⁴ As in earlier chapters, I shall henceforth use masculine forms only to simplify the writing.

All those who can trace their genealogy to a former incumbent of the respective title are eligible to succeed to an office. With respect to an office of *cilol*, the choice of a candidate is usually undertaken by the *atubung* of the title although there are cases in which the selection of a future incumbent is carried out by certain other *ayilol* with whom the office in question claims close perpetual kinship ties. In the case of a *nvubu* this task is entrusted to the *cilol* from whom the sub-noble depends.

Once the successor has been chosen, a ritual performance designated *kuyingil*(v.) *mwant* ("to mock/to make fun of a chief") will take place²⁵. The heir is rubbed with white kaolin and taken around the village on the shoulders of a commoner. They run through the crowd who goes after them throwing things, shouting and mocking the nominee and trying to hit and pinch him. This performance is accompanied by applauses and howls of joy (*tulabwiil*) from the women. The Aruwund explain that they should take full advantage of the fact that the heir is not yet a chief.

In the case of a *nvubu*, the nominee should - once the above ceremony is completed - present his ritual salutation before the *cilol* on whom he depends. The latter will then make a short speech giving advice to the newly elected noble as how to act within his new office. Dance and drinking will take place all night and, early next morning, a meeting (*citentam*) is convoked by the *cilol* to communicate to the population the story of the succession and announce the ancestor to whom the nominee traces his right to the office. The new *nvubu* is also told the limits of his land (*mpat*).

The installation ceremony briefly described for the case of a *nvubu* becomes, however, considerably more complex when dealing with the succession to an office of *cilol*, and even more so if the *cilol* to be invested has the right to wear a *rukan* (which he

²⁵ This stage of the investiture is only undertaken in the case of *nvubu* or certain (mostly minor) *ayilol*.

inherits from his predecessors on receiving the title). In this latter case the most important occasion in the chief's installation (v.: *kudiish*) is that which leads to the wearing of the *rukan*, a moment referred to as *kudjiik*(v.) *rukan* (lit.: "to be dressed/invested with the *rukan*"). This action is preceded by a long purifying ceremony to prepare the candidate to receive the sacred bracelet. The therapeutic action, designated by the verb *kulap*, takes place inside a seclusion hut called *masas*, as mentioned before, which is built for the purpose. There the elected heir should retreat while undertaking a treatment with a specific medicine named *malap*²⁶ (cf. *Photographs 8 and 9*). The ritual specialists presiding over this curative process are the *atubung* (or *atushiw*) of the *cilol* being invested who function as healers (*angang*). The ceremony lasts from sunset till just before sunrise when the heir to the office comes out of confinement to undergo a ritual bath in the nearest river.

When the healing is completed the new incumbent may wear his *rukan* and clean garments. The newly invested *cilol* will then preside over his first *citentam* where he is to proclaim his genealogy and point out the line of descendance which made him eligible for that office. This is followed by speeches by other people involved in the investiture as ritual specialists, namely the *atubung* who, as healers in the *masas*, are to make a short report on the healing. Once all this is accomplished the new chief should perform a war dance with a sword (*mpak ya mukwaal*), an action referred to by the verb *kutombuk* and which aims at "displaying the power", *kufuny*(v.) *ulabu*. At the end of the dance - and as he pierces the ground with the sword - the *cilol* proclaims his "name of succession" (*dijin da uswaan*), the name which he shall use thereafter and which indicates the ancestral

²⁶ A period of treatment and seclusion is also a requirement even in the installation of *ayilol* who do not possess a *rukan*, although in this latter case the *malap* is not employed. The therapeutic practices for these lesser chiefs (simply designated by the verb *kwok* which applies to healing actions in general) only imply the confinement of the nominee in a *masas* accompanied by the singing of the audience, from outside, all through the night. Curative practices do not take place, however, in the investiture of a *nvubu*, a *cilol*'s sub-noble.



Photograph 8: Building the masas for a cilol's investiture.



Photograph 9: Inside the masas of a cilol.

predecessor to whom he traces his genealogy.

Having completed the investiture in the *cilol*'s home village, the new dignitary will be submitted to one last ritual performance, this time at the capital where he is to be presented to the *Mwant Yaav*. Only after this final ceremony, known as *kupan mpemb* ("to give kaolin"), is the newly invested *cilol* recognized as chief by the Ruwund sovereign. The ceremony takes place during a royal *citentam* in Musumb. At the meeting, the nomination and investiture of the new *cilol* is publically announced and an account given of the way in which the choice of the candidate was carried out. The *Mwant Yaav* throws a chiefly skirt (*mukambu*) to the new *cilol* which he is to catch and subsequently to wear. After putting on his official garments the dignitary returns to the audience and sits on the ground before the sovereign. The *Mwant Yaav* hands him white kaolin to rub on his face, chest and arms and the new *cilol* performs his first ritual greeting before the king. He is then given the *jinsambu* (copper bracelets) and the animal skin on which he should sit thereafter on all ritual occasions.

The Royal Installation Ritual²⁷

When a king dies, the *Nswaan Murund* is immediately informed. On hearing the news she is to go to the royal palace and retrieve the king's bracelet which she is to keep in her custody until a new sovereign is invested at the Nkalaany River by the *atubung*. On her way to the royal residence she is accompanied by her people (those living in the *caas*, her ward), the cortege moving to the rhythm of the song "wend-a-munan" which the *atubung* perform whenever they parade before the sovereign on ritual occasions. At the

²⁷ The description below is a reconstruction of the royal enthronement ceremony based on numerous conversations with the eighteen *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* in office as well as with former incumbents of these titles. I also cross-checked my own data with the unpublished description presented in Di-Diaka, 1974-5. I never attended the ceremony myself.

palace the king's corpse lies on top of a leopard skin and the *Nswaan Murund*, covering herself and the *Mwant Yaav* with a piece of white muslin fabric, takes the royal *rukan* from the sovereign's arm. As she seizes hold of the *rukan* she claims to be merely retrieving the bracelet which her own father (*taat'uku*), Nkond, had once left her. Wrapped in white cloth the bracelet is tied around her waist and the *Nswaan Murund* returns to her own palace. There she sits on the doorway wearing her own insignia of power while a message is sent to the royal palace to announce that *Ruwej*²⁸ has reached home. Only then are the instruments of percussion, the *cinkuv* and the *mond*, played to announce the king's death to all Ruwund population.

The actions of mourning will then take its course (I abstain here from a description of the royal funerary rite which is intended for later writing elsewhere). The *Nswaan Murund*, however, cannot partake in either the ritual crying (*cidil*) or the burial of the king. While the weeping for the deceased takes place, the *Nswaan Murund*, now in possession of the king's *rukan*, should chant the licentious songs of twinship, the so-called "songs of *ubwang*". Indeed she is now, once again, the Ruwund princess who looks for a "husband" and, therefore, she is to be concerned solely with the investiture of the new king, "ignoring", so to speak, the bereavement of the deceased *Mwant Yaav*.

The *cidil* (the ritual crying) takes place inside the royal enclosure, in front of the king's palace, where the corpse is displayed (*ku cital*), just like in any commoner's funerary ceremony. From the very first day of the mourning the royal throne, then placed *at the back* of the palace, is occupied by the *Sakawaat Nkwaany*, the senior among the *iin mazemb*. However, when the corpse is taken away to be buried the *Sakawaat* moves the royal throne *to the front* of the palace, a seat which he is to occupy until the newly elected

²⁸ In italic for it is here employed as an office title.

sovereign proceeds to a public payment upon which this dignitary will vacate it. While occupying the royal seat the senior of the *mazemb* wears the insignia of his own office with the exception of the *rukan* which all chiefs are interdicted from wearing during the interregnum, that is, from a royal death to the ceremony of investiture of the new king at the Nkalaany. Indeed all *nkan* will have acquired impurity on a king's death (as they are, after all, mere reproductions of one sole ancestral bracelet, that of Iyaal-a-Mwaaku himself) and have thus to be purified before being worn once again by the chiefs.

1. Preliminary ceremony in Musumb

Immediately after the announcement of the sovereign's death the choice of a new king takes place, a phase of the general election process which also in the case of the sovereign is referred to as *kutond(v.) mwant* (lit.: "to choose as chief"). Those among the *iin mes* who want to become candidates to the throne (for only those, considered *aan-a-Mwant Yaav*, can aspire to the royal office) come to the palace of the *Nswaan Murund* "to plead" (v.: *kulembijek*) for the royal power. The candidates present palm wine and make offerings to *Ruwej* and the people of the *mazemb*, her subjects, for the choice of a new king depends exclusively upon their own resolution. The candidate who pleases the *Nswaan Murund* (in the sense that she is indeed choosing a new "husband") is the one whom she will appoint to succeed to the throne. The *iin mazemb*, constituting the people of *Ruwej* in Musumb, do have influence on her choice, but the final decision belongs to the princess alone as the ultimate representative of the Ruwund ancestral order.

Once the candidate has been chosen an election and preliminary installation ceremony, designated as *kudiish(v.) mwant* ("to install as chief"), will be carried out in Musumb allowing the heir to the throne to rule until it is possible to undertake the major journey to the Nkalaany area where the new king will be fully invested by the *atubung*.

Until then, however, the heir rules on a probationary basis with the name of *Mwaadyaat*, a title which means "perpetual son of a chief". In fact, only after completing the enthronement at the Nkalaany can the newly elected king legitimately claim both the title of *Mwant Yaav* and the full status of sovereignty.

At the capital, when the choice of the *Nswaan Murund* becomes known, the elected candidate should immediately "hide away". Once discovered the nominee is "caught" and taken (apparently by force) to the ward of the *Mwaad Mwiish* in the *mazemb*, where a little grass hut (also designated *masas*) has been built. The heir enters the seclusion hut to be submitted to a brief purification ceremony carried out during the night. When he comes out at dawn, he is immediately entrusted to the hands of the *Caal-a-Mazemb* who will guide him to a second *masas*. There the heir spends a second night. Finally, on the third day (it is now the day after the deceased sovereign's burial), the successor to the throne will be guided to the royal courtyard where Ruwej, accompanied by her people, will present him to the Aruwund. His genealogy and personal achievements are then recited in public.

When the newly elected king reaches the courtyard, however, the royal seat, which was placed in the middle of the square for the occasion, is occupied by the *Sakawaat*, the senior of the *iin mazemb*, and this dignitary will only vacate the throne after payment from the sovereign. The payment is negotiated and finally agreed. The *Sakawaat* gets up and the *Mwaadyaat* sits on the throne²⁹. The senior dignitary of the *mazemb*, now exhibiting his submission to royalty, moves to his rightful place, sitting on the skin of an antelope (*ncil*), and salutes the elected sovereign by clapping his hands and prostrating himself on the ground. As already pointed out (*supra*:74) this is the sole occasion on which the

²⁹ The very name of "Sakawaat" alludes to this fact, cf. *supra*:145.

Sakawaat is to lie on the ground in greeting and display of obedience to the king.

2. The king's investiture at the Nkalaany

Once the successor to the throne (now entitled *Mwaadyaat*) has been through this preliminary ceremony in Musumb, he can start collecting the payment which he will make to the *atubung* on the occasion of his investiture at the Nkalaany. Many months or even a full year may elapse between the election at the capital and this journey to the sacred lands. When the time is settled for the royal installation ritual to take place, a message is sent to the chief (*cilol*) *Ncakai Makal* who is the guardian of the site by the Nkalaany River where was once located the *musumb* of the first *Mwant Yaav*. This dignitary is the first *mwaan* (*mwaanat*) of Ruwej's eldest *nwanamaaku* (sister/cousin), Karumbu, and thus also a *mwaan* of Ruwej. As a result of this perpetual kinship tie he is considered *nwiipu* (uterine nephew/female cousin's child) of the *atubung*.

It is the *Ncakai Makal* who announces to all at the Nkalaany, *atubung* and *ayilol*, that a new king will be invested, following the oral traditions according to which it was he who communicated the arrival of Cibind Yirung in Ruwund lands and brought the foreigner to Ruwej's presence (cf. *supra*:39). This *cilol* is, additionally, in charge of organizing the building of what is seen as a replica of the *musumb* of the first *Mwant Yaav*, the son of Cibind Yirung. Having left the village of Kasal Katok, the founder-king would have settled on the east (right) river bank of the Nkalaany founding the first *musumb*, *Iyikel* (from verb *kuyikel*, "to oversee, to govern"). A new *Iyikel* is erected for every ceremony of investiture of a new *Mwant Yaav*. Nearly one hundred houses are built in straw in an arrangement which, with some adjustments to the requirements of the occasion, reproduces the main layout of the present Ruwund capital, Musumb. The *Ncakai*

Makal summons all *ayilol*³⁰ (the *atubung* being the original local chiefs do not participate) from the neighbouring areas and organizes the building which may take as long as a full month. Once the investiture is concluded the *musumb* is destroyed and the *Ncakal Makal* will then be in charge of guarding the site of the palace and its enclosure (*cipang ca rupep*³¹) until a new enthronement takes place on death of the *Mwant Yaav* then installed.

On route:

The enthronement ritual at the Nkalaany River is always carried out in the dry season. The retinue leaves Musumb before dawn in direction of the Nkalaany area, the mythical place where kingship is said to have originated and the site where the *atubung* inhabit. The *Mwaadyaat*, the *Nswaan Murund*, the *Mwaad* and the *Rukonkish* are transported in this very order sitting on uncovered litters while the accompanying population undertakes the lengthy journey (around 80-90 kilometers long) on foot.

En route the *Mwaadyaat* is to stop on three sites. The first is at Kateng (cf. *Map 4*), before the crossing of the Luisa River where the heir and the accompanying population arrive in the early morning. At Kateng, the *Mwaadyaat* is received by the village chief, the *Mwiin Kateng*, a dignitary originating from the Nkalaany area who succeeded in conquering the Amariiz, as are designated the peoples occupying the area surrounding the Luisa River (called "Riiz" in the Ruwund language). The heir sleeps this first night at Kateng. Early next morning, at dawn, he and his retinue head to the Luisa River

³⁰ The *Mwant Rumang*, both due to his status of "semi-kabung" (cf. *supra*:185) and due to the fact that he was Ruwej's former companion and thus a rival of the king, is the only *cilol* at the Nkalaany who is not to participate in the building of *Iyikel* or else contribute with any food offerings to the royal investiture.

³¹ For it is made with branches of the tree called *mupep* (*ru-* is an augmentative), a tree belonging to the *Euphorbiaceae* family (identified for the Kahemba area as *Hymenocardia acida*, cf. de Boeck, 1991:478).

accompanied by the *Mwiin Kateng*. On the other bank (at Kapopo) offerings are made by the *Mwiin Kapopo* at the tomb (*nzaay*) of a former deceased *Mwant Yaav* and, from there, the cortege departs to Kas.

At the village of the *Mwant Kas* a major hunt is carried out by the *amayang*, the hunters of the cult designated "uyang"³². The hunters cut trunks of the trees *mupep* and *muyombu* and plant them before going on the hunt. The *Mwaadyaat* supplies the gunpowder and ask the *Nswaan Mulapu* to evoke the ancestors on his behalf pleading for a successful expedition. Once the game has been caught, blood is offered at the *muyombu* (representing spirits of deceased ancestors) while dancing and singing of *uyang* takes place. Finally, the meat is distributed to all the population present.

The successor to the throne and his following sleep the second night at Kas where the *Mwaadyaat* visits the site of the ancient *musumb* of the *Mwant Yaav* Muteb-a-Kasang (Musumb wa Mwem). At dawn the heir continues his journey. A short way away, however, he finds the *Mwant Kas* lying by the tomb of a former *Mwant Yaav*'s *mwaan* (of whom the *Mwant Kas* is considered a younger brother/cousin, *mwaan-kanc*), pretending to be dead. The *Mwaadyaat* makes a payment and the *Mwant Kas* gets up. The retinue can then proceed on the journey to the Nkalaany.

On the third day the future king reaches as far as the village of Kabeb. A further

³² *Iiyang* (pl.: *amayang*) is a hunter who is washed with the medicine (called *cisukul*) of the *uyang* cult supposed to make one "see animals" and therefore be successful in hunting. The *amayang* may hunt with a variety of protecting *akish* (spirits) which require the building of different types of shrines namely the *muhaany* (a bifurcated branch of the tree *mupep* stuck on the ground), the *mukaal* (built with small sticks of wood), the *mukong* (a tooth of a deceased hunter) and the *antambu* (two small earth mounds with two pairs of legs made with sticks each, representing two lions). These names apply both to the *akish* and to the corresponding shrines. A *mukong* may appear in the body of a person left by a deceased relative who was also a hunter of *uyang*. It manifests itself by a localized pain and can be extracted by a healer. A diviner can reveal to the patient the ancestor who left him the *mukong* or else detect other types of hunting *akish* inhabiting a person. Once the *mukish* in question is revealed, the patient, who then becomes a *iyyang* (a hunter of *uyang*), should build the correspondent shrine and make offerings (in blood and certain prescribed parts of the animal caught called *yiljimb*) upon successive hunts.

stop is made here, for this was the site of a former *Mwant Yaav*'s *musumb* (that of the *Mwant Yaav* Muteb-a-Cikomb) and the place where his tomb is located. This site is known as "Musumb wa Ciiman". The heir visits the tomb, gunshots being fired to indicate the royal presence and to pay homage to the deceased.

The next morning (on the fourth day) the population of Kabeb, as had already happened at Kas, undertakes a hunting expedition according to the ceremony of *uyang*. On their return from the hunt, in the evening, the *amayang* will plant a bifurcated branch of the tree *mupep* in the ground (this shrine being called *muhaany*, cf. *supra*:209,n.32) representing an ancestor (*mukish*) of the deceased *Mwant Yaav*. The hunters will then cut up the meat and make offerings to the spirit³³. Once these ritual actions are concluded the hunters eat, followed by all the population present (excluding the heir himself). Songs and dancing of *uyang* will then be performed by the hunters.

At the Nkalaany:

The next morning (fifth day) the heir and his retinue reach the Nkalaany River, at the village of Kasaaku³⁴. Before the arrival of the cortege at the river, it is the *Kasaaku*'s duty "to prepare" (v.: *kurijek*) the *akish* of the *Mwant Yaav* (the rocks of Kabembil and Cikomb, cf. *supra*: 197) of which he is the guardian. He is to clean them of overgrown grass, sweep the area and pour palm wine (*maruvu ma ntomb*) as an offering to the ancestors to ensure the safe crossing of the river by the future *Mwant Yaav*.

When the *Mwaadyaat*, the heir to the throne, arrives at Kasaaku he is not to pass through

³³ These offerings consist of blood and cooked *yijimb* (certain viscera and other parts considered to hold the animal's strength (cf. *supra*:192) as well as a piece of *ruku* (manioc dough), palm wine (*maruvu ma ntomb*) and white kaolin.

³⁴ Ruwund villages, as remarked earlier (*supra*:163), often have the name of their chief's office title. Hence "Kasaaku" will not appear in italic whenever it refers to the name of the locality whose leader is the *kabung Kasaaku*. The same applies to all other similar cases throughout the text.

the village. Instead, he is to take a path built for the purpose bordering the settlement toward the river. Meanwhile the village chief, the *kabung Kasaaku*, is awaiting the *Mwaadyaat's* arrival by the rock of Kabembil, on the left (west) river bank, where he has built a small ceremonial straw hut in which he should retreat (except for the occasions in which he himself is called upon to perform his tasks as a ritual specialist) until the royal investiture is complete and the newly invested *Mwant Yaav* returns to Musumb³⁵.

As the *Mwaadyaat* reaches the river he finds the path blocked by a liana (called *ntand-a-waj*, "cob's web", for it functions much like a web which is built by a spider to avoid the passage of insects) and the *Kasaaku* lying behind it on the rock of Kabembil, covered with a white muslin cloth. As he lies on the ground, the *Kasaaku* represents a deceased person (*mufu*) and the future king is to negotiate a payment through an intermediary until the *kabung* finds them agreeable and decides to get up³⁶. This is understood as a payment by the heir to the ancestors for his seizing of the Ruwund power. The *Kasaaku* then offers a white cock to the *Mwaadyaat* and gives him kaolin to rub on his body. Only then will the *Kasaaku* remove the liana which obstructs the passage to let the heir get through.

The future *Mwant Yaav* is then taken across the river. He is carried on a litter (*mwow*) and under no circumstance should he touch the water in the river. As he crosses he holds with his finger the little finger of the *Kasaaku*, a gesture with which healers

³⁵ No interdictions affect the *Kasaaku* in the period during which he stays inside this hut.

³⁶ For this ritual action the *kabung Kasaaku* is praised as follows:

Mwiin mayaal wamwaal pansh
malaaw amband yibwobu

"He of the rocks lay flat on the ground
Where the women put the *yibwobu* [soaked and peeled manioc] to dry.

guide their patients³⁷. Indeed the *atubung* function in the king's installation ceremony as a group of healers who pass on their patient from one to another, according to their ritual attributions. Thus once the heir and his retinue complete the crossing of the Nkalaany River, the *Kasaaku* passes on the king into the care of another *kabung*, this time the *Ijimb*, who holds him in the same manner, by his little finger.

From the *atubung* only the *Ijimb* and the *Kiizal* are to await the heir on the east river bank. In this they are accompanied by the *Mwiin Citazu* who, being a *kalaal* ("he who vigilates") of the *Mwant Yaav*, should tell if the way is safe. This latter dignitary salutes the *Mwaadyaat* and, once the cortege has crossed the river, they proceed to meet the *cilol Ncakai Makal* who guides the future sovereign to his palace at the ancestral *musumb* of *Iyikel* (situated next to the village of *Ncakai Makal* itself). The heir retires and, once he has had some rest, he receives the visit of the *Ncakai Makal* who presents a detailed report on all the offerings (or tribute, *milambu*, sing.: *mulambu*) made to the king by the *ayilol*. The offerings consist of foods to be consumed both in the palace and outside during the enthronement ceremony.

It is also on this occasion that the future *Mwant Yaav* is to pay the *atubung* for the ritual action they shall carry out during the installation. Besides the sum given to the *atubung* in general, additional payments will be made by the heir to each and every *kabung* on performance of their particular tasks as ritual specialists. Indeed these payments are understood as a compensation which the *Mwant Yaav*, as heir of *Cibind Yirung* and thus a foreigner in *Ruwund* lands, has to give to the autochthonous chiefs to seize hold of a power of which they claim to be the legitimate and original holders.

³⁷ This gesture aims at protecting a patient from sorcery while being healed, for the afflicted is then in a condition of great vulnerability to impurity and evil practices. While linked to the healer in such a manner the patient is believed to be immune to such practices.

The occasion of the king's investiture with the *rukan* at the Nkalaany is also the moment of submitting certain *ayilol* to their own healing (v.: *kulap*) which will equally allow these dignitaries to wear their own *nkan*, the bracelets they inherited from the ancestors of the respective office titles. In fact, certain major *ayilol* - such as the *Rukonkish*, the *Mwiin Dinying* and the *Nswaan Murund* herself -, despite having actually been in office for a long time, can only start wearing their bracelets once they have been healed at the Nkalaany on occasion of a king's ceremony of enthronement. Hence, whenever new incumbents of such titles are elected after the investiture by the *atubung* of the *Mwant Yaav* in office, they will have to await the next royal installation to be themselves invested with their *nkan*. *Ayilol* other than these, however, are not required to come to the Nkalaany for this ceremony and are fully installed in their own villages and immediately allowed the full use of their insignia³⁸. As for the *atubung* they will wear the *rukan* even if nominated in the reign of a *Mwant Yaav* who has already been installed at the Nkalaany.

The ceremony of investiture and wearing of the *rukan* by the *Rukonkish* takes place at night the day after the heir's arrival at the Nkalaany. The healers in this ceremony are the *atubung* of the *Mukaciland*, the *Rukonkish's* *taat'uku* (father/ancestor), entitled *Mwiin Mpat* and *Mukendj*. The *Mwiin Mpat* pays the *Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb* to hand him the secret of the *malap* with which to heal the *Rukonkish*. While this ceremony takes place the *Mwiin Dinying* is also being healed, in another spot, by the *Mukarusong* and *Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb* (a new *Mwiin Dinying* has to be elected in every king's enthronement). Finally, in the evening of the third day of the stay at *Iyikel*, the *Nswaan Murund* (if the

³⁸ The *Mukaciland*, however, being a *cilol* of a particular status, is not allowed to wear the *rukan* until he has attended a royal installation at the Nkalaany despite the fact that he is submitted to the full healing ceremony in the *masas* immediately when he is first invested.

incumbent of the title has never been healed with the *malap*) undergoes this ritual. The healers on this occasion are again the *Mukarusong* and the *Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb*. In all these cases the ceremony, which takes place inside a seclusion hut built in straw, the *masas*, lasts all night and ends up with the ceremonial cleansing of the title holder in the river, just before dawn. The ritual process is absolutely identical to that to which the royal heir himself is submitted and which I next fully describe.

The healing ceremony with the medicine called *malap* (v.: *kulap*) taking place inside a circular straw hut built to chest height, the *masas*, aims to purify the newly elected king in order to prepare him to receive the *rukan*. This ritual constitutes the first part of the most important phase in the king's installation which is his investiture with the *rukan*, *kudjiik*(v.) *rukan*. This *rukan*, the royal bracelet, is the one which Ruwej would have inherited from her ancestor Iyaal-a-Mwaaku through her own father (*taat'uku*), Nkond-a-Matit. The sacred bracelet is considered a *mukish* for it represents the spirits of the deceased *Ant Yaav* and ancestors of the Aruwund.

In the evening of the fourth day at the Nkalaany, the seclusion and healing of the king takes place. Just after sunset the *Mukarusong*, the *Caawut Yaav* and the *Nswaan Murund*, having entered the ceremonial hut built for the purpose, call the *kabung Siiyaav Kadimb* to go and fetch the heir from the palace. The *Siyaav* brings both the future king and his *Mwaad* (first wife) whom he delivers to the *Caawut Yaav* already awaiting inside the *masas*.

The term "masas" is used to refer to both the period of retreat to which a chief is compelled on his investiture in order to be healed, and the actual seclusion hut where the healing takes place. The hut so designated consists of two parts: the house itself (*kacikumbu ka masas*) and an area encircled by a fence (*cipang ca masas*) forming an

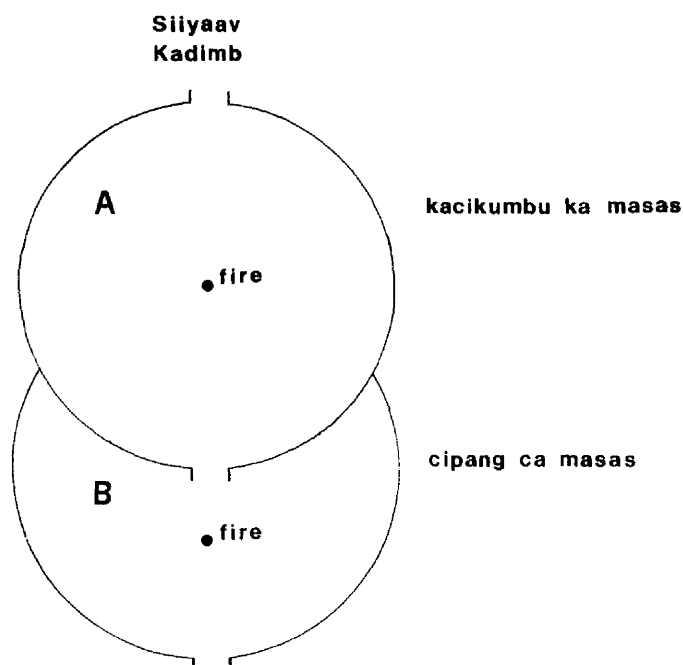
enclosure (cf. *Figure 8*). The participants in the healing enter by the front (east) entrance of the compound, walking backwards, and at dawn, when the ceremony is completed, should come out in the same manner by the back (west) door directly opposite.

Inside the ceremonial hut itself only the following are to enter: the heir and his first wife (the *Mwaad*), considered the "patients" (*ayej*, sing.: *muyej*) and for this reason dressed in white cloth (*malakaany*) and rubbed with white kaolin, the *atubung Mukarusong* and *Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb*, the healers or ritual specialists (*angang*, sing.: *ngang*), the *Nswaan Murund* as representative of Ruwej and the guardian of the deceased *Mwant Yaav's rukan* and, finally, the *cilol* entitled *Mwiin Dinying*. The presence of the *Mwiin Dinying* is justified by the fact that he represents Iyaal-a-Mwaaku. Oral tradition tells that he was the first *mwaan* of Iyaal and only because he left his home village did he renounce his place in favour of the *Mwiin Cipet*. He is, thus, a senior among Ruwej's *anamaaku* (although not a *kabung*).

Immediately outside, in the space enclosed by the fence (*cipang*), are the *atubung Mwant Kayombu*, in his quality of *kalaal* ("he who vigilates") of the *atubung*, the *Mwiin Cipet*, as a representative of the ancestor Iyaal-a-Mwaaku, the *Caawut Ibond* and the *Ijimb*. The *Siiyaav Kadimb* is also present as the guardian (*kalam*) of the back door of the *masas*³⁹. The main task of these *atubung* who stay in the enclosure just outside the ceremonial hut, is to fetch whatever is needed from the inside throughout the night and help by singing the licentious songs of *ubwang* which constitute part of the therapeutic practices. Around the *masas* the Ruwund population drink and dance all night. Other *atubung* who do not participate in the *masas* are not present and will only come the next morning to perform the official march of the *atubung* while taking the heir on a

³⁹ These *atubung*, together with the *Mukarusong* and the *Caawut Yaav* (i.e. all who participate in the *masas* of the king) are said to be the most ancient titles among the *atubung* (cf. *supra*:176).

ceremonial visit to the sacred trees representing the Ruwund ancestors (as described *infra*:221).



A - Mukarusong, Caawut Yaav, Mwiin Dinying, Nswaan Murund, Mwaad and Mwant Yaav.
B - Ijimb, Caawut Ibond, Mwant Kayombu and Mwiin Cipet.

Figure 8: Drawing of the *masas* of the Mwant Yaav

The ceremony which takes place inside the *masas* consists, as mentioned before, in the treatment of the future king with a medicine, used *exclusively* in the investiture of chiefs possessing a *rukan*, denominated *malap*. As a matter of fact *two* medicines are employed in this curative process, the term *malap* being used to designate either one or

the other, according to the informants, or even both⁴⁰. These medicines are prepared in two separate wooden recipients (*yisampwiil*, sing.: *cisampwiil*).

The *malap* was most often said to be a medicine made of various leaves in hot water with which the patient is washed. A whisk of leaves is dipped into the medicine and then passed on the ill person's body (the verb *kukupul* designates this action). The water used in the preparation of this medicine is collected by the *kabung Sakapemb* (cf. *supra*:187-8). When the future king first arrives at the Nkalaany, the *Caawut Yaav* gives a calabash to the *Sakapemb* who is to travel to the ancestral well (*diijiy da malap*) in this *kabung*'s original lands, on the east river bank of the Kajidij. There he will make offerings and evoke the Ruwund ancestors before collecting the water which he will bring to the *musumb* of Iyikel chanting the licentious songs of twinship (songs of *ubwang*). As he arrives, the calabash of water is carried to the *masas* by the *kabung Siityaav Kadimb* who hands it to the *Caawut Yaav* both to prepare the *malap* and to cook inside the *masas*.

In the *masas* the royal heir and his wife are washed periodically by the *Caawut Yaav* in the manner described above in order to cleanse their impurity. At the same time the *rukan* itself is washed with this medicine for, representing the deceased ancestors and having been worn by the late *Mwant Yaav*, it is also impure. On the other hand it is expected that, being treated periodically with the medicine, the bracelet (which is shaped as an open circle) will be widened sufficiently in order to fit the future *Mwant Yaav*'s wrist.

One other medicine - this time one which is given to the "patients" to eat during the ceremony - which some informants also refer to as *malap*, consists of some leaves

⁴⁰ The *atubung* never agreed on this point not having ever attended a king's *masas* themselves (including the present holders of the titles of *Mukarusong* and *Caawut Yaav*). An elderly *Caawut Yaav* no longer in office, who had been a healer in more than one royal installation, defined the *malap* as the medicine of leaves and water which I describe next.

mixed with palm oil (*maany ma ngaaj* only) and small pieces of the food (meat or fish) whose consumption by a chief is strictly regulated. These foods are generally called *masany* (as are indeed designated all foods proscribed by a healer to a patient during the period of treatment in other healing practices). From the moment of the investiture onwards a chief possessing a *rukan* is obliged to consume the *masany* inside the private room called *malal* (alone or with other chiefs who also have a *rukan*).

The foods which compose the *malap* are mainly supplied by the *kabung Nswaan Mwiiz*. They include, among others, the fishes *kaloy* and *mbaaz*⁴¹ and the birds *ngwaad*, *kavuzu* and *katent*⁴². The *kabung* entitled *Cipwaapu Kalaw* will be in charge of supplying the *ampur* (palm grubs) which also constitute an ingredient of the *malap*. All these foods, the *masany*, are handed to the *Nswaan Murund* who will take them into the ceremonial hut.

During the whole night in which the curing is taking place, the participants in the *masas* (those who actually enter the hut as well as the *atubung* who stay just outside, in the outer enclosure) sing songs of *ubwang*, licentious songs of twinship believed to have healing properties (cf. *infra*:ch.VII,section II), accompanied by the ringing of a bell (*rupwambu*). It is the *Mukarusong*'s role to ring this bell all through the night while supervising the *Caawut Yaav*'s curative practices. The king and his wife, however, are not allowed to sing, or for that matter to speak, for the whole duration of the treatment. Again they are forbidden to fall asleep during the night. The *Caawut Yaav* will avoid this by wetting the patients' faces periodically with the whisk dipped in the medicine, a practice which is believed to make the king "see clearly", that is, judge affairs without fear or

⁴¹ According to Hoover (1976) the *kaloy* is a black catfish. As for the *mbaaz* he presents no identification.

⁴² Red-necked francolin or spur-fowl, harlequin quail and Estrilda bird respectively (cf. Hoover, 1976).

favour (cf. *infra*:246-7).

Meanwhile, palm wine (*maruvu ma ntomb*) is drunk. It is the *Mukarusong*'s ritual duty to pour and distribute it inside the *masas*. The calabashes of wine drunk inside the seclusion hut are provided by the *kabung Sakalend Mwiisaaz* (cf. *supra*:196). Finally, the *Mwiin Dinying*, also participating in the retreat, has the ritual task of keeping the fire around which all are seated from going out.

In former times, it was during this healing ceremony that new human tendons were placed on the king's *rukan*. As soon as a king's death was announced, the whole population was forbidden from going to the fields or else from wandering outside the villages. Any passerby walking about in the bush at the Nkalaany could indeed be caught by the *Caawut Ibond* to provide the human tendons for the *rukan*. The *Caawut Ibond* would kill the sacrificial victim (cf. *supra*:183), give the tendons to the *Ijimb* to dry after which they would be entrusted to the *Caawut Yaav*, the healing specialist, to be added to the *rukan* at the occasion of the royal enthronement.

The next morning (fifth day at Iyikel), just before dawn, the king comes out of the *masas*, to be ritually bathed (all healing should be completed before sunrise). The sovereign is guided to the Nkalaany River by the *Mukarusong* and the *Caawut Yaav*. At the river the *Kasaaku* and the *Cibumbu da Mem* await. The future *Mwant Yaav* is led by the *Caawut Yaav* to the top of the rock of Cikomb (in the river rapids) where he is ritually washed by the *Cibumbu da Mem* (who functions here, and for this occasion alone, as the *Kasaaku*'s "assistant"). The water in which the sovereign bathes is taken from a submerged tunnel formed underneath the rock and for which the *Cibumbu da Mem* has to dive. While the ritual cleansing takes place the *Kasaaku* cites (v.: *kusaaz*) the names of previous *Ant Yaav* and, as he speaks, throws white beads to both directions of the source and mouth of the river. Once the ritual bath is completed the *Cibumbu da Mem* (or

the *Kasaaku* himself) guides the sovereign (again holding the king's little finger with his own) to the river bank. The ceremonial washing, performed in this way, aims to purify (v.: *kutokish*) the future *Mwant Yaav* and give him strength (*ulabu*).

Gunshots indicate that the king has finished the washing. The heir returns to the *masas*, pays the *Mukarusong* and the *Caawut Yaav* for their work as ritual specialists and dresses in new clean clothes (the old ones, his and the *Mwaad*'s, having been given to the *kabung Siiyaav Kadimb*). For the first time the king is to wear the *rukan* which will be placed on his *left* arm since the royal power was inherited from Ruwej and her ancestors, that is, from the king's *maternal* side.

At dawn, on his return to the royal palace from the ceremonial bath, the new sovereign is to consume his first cooked meal in the *malal*, a chief's private kitchen. Indeed, from this moment onwards, the king will be compelled to eat in seclusion. It is the *kabung Mwiin Cipet* who is in charge of lighting the first fire in the king's *malal* on which the royal official cook (the *cilol* entitled *Mwaad Mwiish*) will prepare a meal during which the newly invested sovereign will observe, for the first time, a chief's rules of commensality. To light this fire the *Mwiin Cipet* is to strike two stones (or metal pieces) designated as *mpak ya kasu* (a fire lit in such a manner is known as *kasu ka Ruwej*, "fire of Ruwej"). The fire should light up at a single stroke and once it is going the *Mwaad Mwiish* will cook a meal of meat and *ruku* (the manioc dough which is the basis of any Ruwund meal). The *Mwiin Cipet* then cuts a piece of the tree *muyombu* which he covers with a white cloth and on which he prepares *mbij ja mwon* ("medicine of meat"). He eats a little of the medicine and then gives it to the king. Then the *kabung*, playing the role of a healer, initiates the "patient" to his first cooked meal by giving him small pieces of *ruku* to bite, a ritual action designated as *kusumish*(v.) *ruku* ("to cause to bite *ruku*"). Before leaving the newly invested sovereign to consume his meal alone, the *Mwiin Cipet* should

still teach him all the prescribed attitudes a king is to observe inside the *malal*. From then on the sovereign will only be allowed to eat in his and the *Nswaan Murund*'s private kitchens.

Once the sun has risen, but still in the early morning, the new sovereign is guided to the *akish*, the trees *mudjangam* and *mulemb* which represent Ruwund ancestors and of which the *Ijimb* is the guardian⁴³. This tour starts at the palace where the *atubung* fetch the king, now wearing his royal garments and insignia of power. The *atubung*, themselves in ceremonial dress (as described *supra*:117-8), walk in cadence singing "wend-a-munan wa Akantaal" ("the march in a group of the original Aruwund") at the rhythm of the bell rung by the *Mukarusong*. The *Mwant Kayombu* leads the line followed by the other *atubung*. As he advances he faces the *Mwiin Citazu*, the *kalaal* of the *Mwant Yaav*, who walks backwards in front of the line. Towards the end of the line is the *Mukarusong* and the *Caawut Yaav-a-Kayemb* followed by the new king and his *Mwaad* and, finally, the cortege ends with the *Nswaan Murund*.

On the way to the *mudjangam* the heir finds the *Siiyaav Kadimb* lying on the ground pretending to be dead. The cortege stops, the king pays (having negotiated as in other cases) and the *Siiyaav* "ressuscitates". The title of "Kadimb" (from the verb *kudimban* "to cheat, to lie") and the praise-phrase of this office allude to this "false" death of the *Siiyaav*:

Yaam Siiyaav Kadimb, iikuuny wadimbana kufa
Mwant Yaav wawiil mazaal

"It is me, the *Siiyaav Kadimb*, the man who pretended to die,
The *Mwant Yaav* fell of trembling"

The "death" of the *Siiyaav* is interpreted by the Aruwund as being associated to

⁴³ The tree *mulil-a-nkibu*, which was traditionally also guarded by the *Ijimb*, no longer exists.

the impurity he acquired by receiving the polluted clothes worn by the heir and his *Mwaad* during the *masas*.

Arrived at the *mudjangam* the heir sits under the tree whose trunk is covered with white kaolin. It is the *Ijimb* who is now in charge of the ritual performance. The *kabung* will rub one of the king's arms with kaolin (right or left according to the side, paternal or maternal respectively, in relation to which the incumbent legitimates his access to the royal office) and then spits some powder over his eyes. The latter is a gesture of blessing for both the king and his reign.

Once blessed by the ancestors represented by the sacred trees of the *Ijimb*, the king proceeds with the *atubung* to visit the tree *mukamb*, the *mukish* guarded by the *Kiizal*. A similar performance is carried out. The *Kiizal* rubs kaolin on the sovereign's arm and spits the white powder over his face. The king embraces the tree to obtain the blessing and protection of one more Ruwund ancestor.

Always in a cortege, chanting and walking in cadence, they head on to the *cimet*, an area of higher ground where the sovereign will preside over his first *citentam*. Having arrived to the *cimet*, however, the king finds the *Mwant Muyind*, a *cilol* originary of the Nkalaany who is in charge of guarding this site, sitting on the throne. The king negotiates a payment and, reaching an agreement, the *Muyind* vacates the royal seat. Then the sovereign, with the applause and gunshots from the audience, occupies his due place while the *Muyind* is to perform the ritual salutation to the new king prostrating himself on the ground. Only then do the *ayilol* present sit down on their skins and, in turn, greet the sovereign.

The king now occupies his royal seat. The *kabung Ngwaad* comes to claim payment as he exhibits the bow he is said to have once taken from Cibind Yirung and a calabash of palm wine recalling that stolen by the Luba hunter on his arrival in Ruwund

lands (cf. *supra*:38-9;47-8). As he requests payment from the sovereign the *kabung* utters the following words: "This is the wine that you took from me [and] this the bow I took from you. It was this wine that created this power [the kingship]. Pay!" (*Maruvu aam maawuy wankwaata. Ut ow waawuy nakutambula. Caad maruvu aam maawuy wamena want wiinow. Fut lel!*). Then the *Caawut Yaav* makes a speech reporting to the Ruwund population the result of the healing which took place during the night and how the king was left without any wounds (*yitat*) from it. At this stage the *Mwant Kayombu* is standing right in front of the *Mwant Yaav* with his *mukombu*, the walking-stick symbol of ancestry and of the *atubung*'s power. The *Mwant Yaav* pays the *Mwant Kayombu* to remove the *mukombu* and only then is he to make his own speech explaining the genealogical links which legitimate his claim to the royal title. Then the king performs the dance with a sword (*mpak ya mukwaal*) designated by the verb *kutombuk* which aims at exhibiting his strength and power. At the end of the dance he pierces the ground with the sword and, as he makes this movement, utters his "name of succession" (*dijin da uswaan*), that is, the personal name of a former *Mwant Yaav* who is his ancestral predecessor and from whom he descends.

Now fully proclaimed "Mwant Yaav", the sovereign is saluted in a long ritual performance by all the *ayilol* present at the ceremony. It is also on this occasion that the *Kalamiikond* comes with bananas from his tree and offers them to the newly invested *Mwant Yaav* to be eaten inside the *malal*. As mentioned previously (*supra*:193), this kind of banana (*diikond da mucim-a-ntalal*) constitutes a medicine aiming at giving the *Mwant Yaav* strength of character as well as at increasing his virility. The *Mwant Kanding*, in his turn, will present the king with a sample of agricultural produce and a tuber of manioc (*cishind*) symbolizing the fertility of Ruwund soil.

In the evening of the same day the *Nfarukind* and the *Kazamb* plant the tree

muyombu which they brought from Makezu, their home village on the east river bank of the Kajidij (cf. *supra*:190). The *muyombu* (a trunk of 1-2 meters approximately) is planted just outside the *cipang* of the *Mwant Yaav* at Iyikel and is wrapped in white cloth. These two *atubung* then fetch the king at the palace to enter in a *masas*, referred to as "the *masas* of the *muyombu*", where he is healed by both the *Nfarukind* and the *Kazamb*. Only those three will be inside the ceremonial hut during the healing. They sit around a fire and the king is washed (v.: *kukupul*) with a medicine composed of leaves and water for a few hours and given *mbij ja mwon* to eat, an action which is once more accompanied by the chanting of the songs of *ubwang*. It is only after this last healing ceremony is completed that the sovereign will, at the end of the day, finally retire to his palace.

The next day is the day of departure. However, early in the morning, just before the *Mwant Yaav* sets off on his journey back to Musumb, he is guided to the *muyombu*. The white cloth is unwrapped from the tree (no one should see it before this occasion) and, after having made a payment to the *Nfarukind* and the *Kazamb*, the *Mwant Yaav* embraces the tree to receive the power and strength (*ulabu*) of the ancestor it represents. The tree will not thrive, indeed it will soon perish in the dry season. Once the king has embraced the *muyombu* of the *Nfarukind*, he should return immediately to Musumb *without looking backwards*. He will now depart with the authority of the ancestors of the Nkalaany, the *akish* which shall guard and protect him thereafter. On his way back the king will have to take a different route from that which first led him to the Nkalaany for, having gone as *Mwaadyaat*, submissive to the authority of the *atubung*, he is now to return as the new *Mwant Yaav*, king of the Aruwund.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAKING OF A KING II

The ritual as a structure of rituals

Discussions on royal ritual to date have been far too concerned with kings, queens and dignitaries while too little interest has focused on the life of commoners and their symbolic systems in the understanding of issues on royal symbolism. The long standing debate on the Swazi *Incwala* kingship ritual is a prime example of an approach which asserts that an analysis of royal rites *per se* can constitute the ground for a solid interpretation of kingship symbolism¹. Hence Hilda Kuper's argument in her 1944 article is exclusively based on her detailed and unquestionably excellent description of the *Incwala* ceremony. This provides the sole basis for her sociological interpretation of the royal rite "in terms of its effects on social stratification" (1944:254 or 1947:223). In the author's view the *Incwala* dramatizes both the unity and rank in Swazi society. Again, it is based on Kuper's description of this ritual alone that Max Gluckman develops his cathartic analysis of the *Incwala* as a "ritual of rebellion" allowing for the instituted expression of social conflict which strengthens kingship and renews the unity of the system (cf. 1954, also published in 1963:ch.III).

Against Gluckman's functionalist interpretation of the Swazi *Incwala*, Beidelman's classic essay (1966) represents a considerable shift in the analysis of royal ritual.

¹ A similar remark could be made about the literature on the royal ceremonies of such kingdoms as the Bunyoro of Western Uganda (cf. Beattie, 1959) or the Shilluk of Sudan (cf. Schnepel, 1988).

Beidelman argues that an account of the indigenous beliefs and their symbolic constructs has to fit in with the study of ritual. The need for interpreting royal ritual within a more general and overall symbolic framework is thus here clearly stated. However, despite the pertinence of Beidelman's point, his analysis is limited like previous approaches in that no other specific rites - and in particular those relating to commoners - are taken into account for the explanation of Swazi kingship. Royal symbolism stands again *per se* if in its relation to more general symbolic constructs.

Many recent studies of great merit are also devoid of data on the overall "structure of rituals" within which, I believe, the understanding of royal symbolism should be pursued. Indeed, if a comparison between royal rituals of different, often neighbouring, peoples is commonly undertaken (as in J.- C. Muller, 1990), and royal installation rituals are often placed in the context of other ceremonies of investiture affecting ordinary chiefs (such as in M. Izard's remarkable study on the Yatenga ancient kingdom of Burkina Faso, 1985, cf. ch.III in particular), very seldom is royal ritual analysed or compared to rites of a *different* sort which affect commoners in general.

In an article on the organization of rites, P. Smith resumes once again the Swazi *Incwala*, this time to stress the need in considering the overall structure of rituals (1979). He asserts that different "systems of rituals" coexist within the same culture, that is, rituals that concern mainly the life of individuals or else those that engage the collectivity in general; and according to the "occasional" or "periodical" nature of the series of circumstances to which they are associated. However, I do not find the criteria suggested by him for the definition of a society's particular "systems of rituals" of great help in understanding Ruwund royal ceremonies. In fact Smith himself remarks that these different systems are flexible and open to a society's own interpretation and that rites concerning individuals can, in some contexts, be turned into collective events while

cyclical circumstances can be ritually dealt with on an occasional, rather than a periodical basis. Furthermore, rituals can belong to various systems and receive from them diverse elements and orientations (cf. *ibid.*:147-8). These categories, thus, appear to be operative only to a very limited extent. In spite of this, however, Smith's article appears to me a very important contribution in that it claims that different rites associated to the same series of circumstances "se répondent, s'opposent, se complètent ou se répètent..." (*ibid.*:145), hence drawing us toward analysing a rite in its relation with other rituals of a different sort existing within a society.

Despite the overall limitation, there are studies in which non-royal rites are indeed taken into account in the study of royal symbolism. A. Adler's careful presentation of the king's funerary rites among the Moundang of Tchad (1982) is one such case as well as J.- C. Muller's study on Rukuba initiation rites (1989). The latter work is particularly interesting for the author interprets the installation of Rukuba village chiefs as part of the initiation ritual system. The neophytes follow the same procedure as a chief up to the final stage of the initiation cycle when they should acknowledge publicly that they are not chiefs by refusing to drink the beer which is offered to them in the sacred calabash of chiefship (part of the skull of an ancient chief is floating in the beer). In contrast to the young male initiates, only the chief at his installation should drink from the calabash for the chief is, as the author states, "the only full initiate" within Rukuba society (cf. *ibid.*:204).

Interesting also, although not concerned with royal ritual, is de Mahieu's analysis of the *gandjá* (1985), the ritual institution of circumcision among the Komo of Zaïre, where *different* rites of one same circumcision cycle (such as ordinary initiation ceremonies taking place along a ten year period and the ritual of investiture of the initiation master which opens the cycle) are linked in one and the same semantic field.

Finally, M. Bloch's analysis of ritual among the Merina of Madagascar is a master example of the study of ritual as a "structure of rituals", the approach which I intend to follow here. Although this is also the kind of analysis undertaken by the author in his extensive study of the circumcision rites among this people (1986), this approach is remarkably set forward in his shorter essay on the royal bath in the Merina state (1987). In this article Bloch proposes to understand the royal ceremony of the bath by reference to rituals of death, birth and fertility affecting commoners. In so doing he concludes that royal ritual is built out of *non-royal* symbolism (*ibid.*:271) and, therefore, that the ceremonial practices of ordinary people are of overall importance in the understanding of royal life.

In the case which concerns this analysis, namely the symbolism surrounding Ruwund kingship, an argument similar to that proposed by Bloch may be pursued. Indeed, when looking at the Ruwund material, the nature of the king's installation ceremony can only be perceived by disclosing both its singularity and its resemblance to rituals which affect lesser individuals in Ruwund society. This being so, the symbolic practices concerning commoners (as well as minor chiefs, as suggested in the previous chapter) should be taken, in this case also, to be as important an issue in the understanding of royal symbolism as the study of royal ritual itself. Indeed a ritual *is* and should be looked at as a "constellation" of different rites by reference to which it ought to be defined. It is not just that rituals share a common ideological thinking within which they are construed or else that they are built out of loose elements also present in other rituals. Instead, in much the same manner as the ceremony of the royal bath in Madagascar is both a ritual of blessing and a funerary rite, and the installation of Rukuba village chiefs is to be understood by reference to common male initiation, the king's installation ceremony

among the Aruwund encompasses within it a whole set of rituals of another sort².

I hope to demonstrate that the royal enthronement is, above all, a ceremony of healing. In addition, I shall argue that it can also be seen to assume the contours of a funerary as well as a birth rite or else of a ritual for twins, at different stages of its development and depending on the angle from which one chooses to view it. This profile is also true for the investiture rites of lesser chiefs, bearing in mind that we have previously shown the *non-specificity* of a great deal of the king's enthronement ceremony (cf. *supra*:198). It is within this context and in relation to a wider framework of distinct rituals that I shall next consider the *Mwant Yaav*'s and other investiture ceremonies in Ruwund society.

I

Ruwund investiture rites, royal or non-royal, are centred around the ceremony of healing taking place inside the seclusion hut (*masas*)³ which leads to the very crucial event in the installation of a chief, the investing with the sacred bracelet, symbol of Ruwund ancestral power. Only once this purification ceremony is concluded, and the chief is in possession of the *rukan*, can a *cilol* (or the king himself) legitimately evoke his/her⁴ office title and hold a first public meeting where the "name of succession" (*diijin da uswaan*) will be rendered public⁵ (cf. *supra*:200-1). It is the course of events that takes

² This is also the point made by M. Cartry in his article *From one rite to another* (1992) although not with reference to royal ritual itself. Following the recurrence of a mourning song in various rituals of a single African society, Cartry analyses the common features linking death to initiation rites among the Gurmanceba of Burkina Faso.

³ Cf. *supra*:213-4 for the full semantic scope of the term "masas".

⁴ Masculine forms only will be adopted from here onwards to simplify the text.

⁵ For the purpose of this chapter "investiture of chiefs" will refer generally to the installation ceremonies of both king and *ayilol*, more precisely of *ayilol* who have the right to wear a *rukan* as these

place, from sunset to sunrise, inside the *masas* that we need now to examine closely. The full understanding of these events will inevitably lead us "from one rite to another"⁶ in a series of reappearances of *absent* rites upon which a chief's installation appears to be built⁷.

A chief's investiture, as stated earlier, is primarily a ritual of healing. It follows the overall pattern of ordinary healing ceremonies or else of healing sequences in other sorts of rituals. This is not only true of the precise moment when the successor to office undergoes therapy inside the *masas* but it appears to concern the structure of the investiture ritual as a whole.

Like the *masas* of a chief, the healing practices which constitute part of a great number of other rituals in the Ruwund system take place from sunset up until just before sunrise. "When the sun has gone" (*muten waya kal*) the time has arrived to initiate a healing action, whether it be the cure of a deceased's close relatives in a funerary rite or else the healing of a patient in the ritual for a woman's fertility. All these sorts of therapeutic action are generally designated by the verb *kwok* and a chief to be invested becomes indeed a patient (*muyej*) to be cured and purified of acts in his life prior to the

are the Ruwund dignitaries whose installation procedure parallels more closely that of the *Mwant Yaav* and which will, therefore, prove more useful in the elucidation of royal ritual. In the same frame of mind we shall not consider here the investiture ceremonies of *atubung* for, as remarked earlier, they follow a pattern which differs in many ways from that of both the *ayllo*'s and the king's enthronement rituals (cf. *supra*:177-8).

⁶ After the title of M. Cartry's 1992 article.

⁷ Contrarily to what Bloch concludes for the Merina circumcision ritual (1986) - and suggests as probable for the royal bath ceremony (1987:271,296) - I will not be making here any kind of assertion as to which ritual preceded historically. There are, for the Ruwund case, no historical factors leading to a conclusion and, in any case, I question the explanatory virtue of a chronological assumption. As D. Cannadine remarks while introducing Bloch's article, to explain a ritual in terms of others considered chronologically prior does not solve the problem of accounting for the latter (preceding) events (cf. 1987:16).

investiture. A period of treatment and seclusion is thus a requirement even in the installation of *ayilol* who do not possess a *rukan* (healing does not take place, however, in the investiture of a *nvubu*, a *cilol*'s sub-noble). In the case of major offices endowed with a *rukan*, the curative process, which requires the use of the medicine called *malap*, is designated by a specific verb (*kulap*) and aims, additionally, at purifying the sacred bracelet of the death of previous titleholders as well as at introducing the new chief to the food proscriptions inherent to such a high office.

In a chief's enthronement the curative practices carried out through the night terminate with a ritual bath before sunrise. In the case of the sovereign the washing takes place in the Nkalaany River itself (cf. *supra*:219-20) after which the king is fit to wear, for the first time, his royal garments and regalia of office. Similarly, in rituals other than the enthronement of chiefs the healing process culminates in the ceremonial bath of the patient, just before dawn. The ill person is washed in a river by the healer (*ngang*, pl.: *angang*) after which the "dirty" clothing used during the treatment are to be discarded. Impurity will thus be disposed of and the patient emerges in a new state of cleanness, dressed in fresh garments⁸. This is so in funerary rites which require the healing of the deceased's close relatives after a burial (widowed spouses, orphan children or parents of a dead child) as well as in fertility rituals. In the latter case the cure aims at bringing the spirits of ancestors (*akish*) hindering a woman's fertility to manifest themselves through a patient's trance. These spirits, such as those named *atulemb* for instance, are believed to inhabit a person's body habitually and it is only when "unsatisfied" that they may

⁸ Ritual washes always take place in a stream or river source and under no circumstance is the water brought into the village for such purpose as impurity would then remain inside the village, rather than being washed away by the river.

eventually obstruct a woman's pregnancy⁹. By manifesting themselves as a result of the curative practices, the spirits will reveal their identity and request a sacrifice to the living. A meal is then prepared in accordance to the desire of the *akish* in question and the woman should thereafter be able to conceive.

The healing of a deceased's close relatives or else of a woman aiming to conceive takes place mainly *outside*, in the former case just in front of the house of the dead and, in the latter, in front of the house of the infertile woman or of one of her relatives. In either case the body of the ill person is periodically washed during the course of the night with a whisk of leaves which are dipped in an appropriate medicine. This action is designated by the verb *kukupul* and is accompanied by singing (of songs specific to the ritual in question) carried out by the audience to the rhythm of drumming¹⁰ (cf. *Photographs 10, 11 and 12*).

In contrast, the healing in investiture rituals is extremely *private* and the procedure followed is considered secret. The ceremony takes place away from the eyes of the population present, inside the seclusion hut called *masas* where only a very restricted number of people are allowed to enter. As mentioned before, in the *masas* of a chief who possesses a *rukan*, a particular sort of healing takes place. Generally referred to by the verb *kwok*, "to heal" is here designated by the verb *kulap* as it involves the specific medicine called *malap*. The latter, a medicine composed of leaves of particular trees dipped in water, is also applied with a whisk of leaves over the patient's body (v:

⁹ Other illnesses can also be attributed to particular sorts of spirits (*akish*) such as the *amalemb* (no sing.), for instance, which are responsible for limb, arm and back pains, difficulties in breathing, among others. Healing in these cases follows a similar procedure as for the *atulemb* and the patient is also guided into a trance during which the spirits will reveal their names and request offerings in food. It is claimed, however, that the *atulemb* are the only *akish* of Ruwund origin.

¹⁰ In funerary rites only the spouse(s) of a deceased is submitted to this kind of healing designated by the verb *kukupul*. Parents or orphan children do not undergo such treatment.



Photograph 10: Healing ritual for the spirits amalemb I: washing the patient with a whisk of leaves (v.: kukupul).



Photograph 11: Healing ritual for the spirits amalemb II: patient in trance.



Photograph 12: Healing ritual for the spirits amalemb III: speaking out with the voice of the spirits.

kukupul) in the very same manner as in the therapy of patients in other rituals. In the king's installation all present in the *masas* (except for the two *atubung* who are the healers themselves) are treated in this way (i.e. the *Mwant Yaav*, the *Mwaad*, the *Nswaan Murund* and the *Mwiin Dinying*). The *rukan* is also washed with the *malap* which is believed to make the bracelet widen until it fits the heir's wrist.

Although the healing process in funerary and fertility rituals does not require that the patient goes into retreat, practices which aim solely at the cure of some sort of illness may imply a long period of confinement in a hut called *maseku*, similar in all respects to the *masas*. The *maseku* consists of a hut built in grass and surrounded by a fence forming a small compound in which the patient is to live in isolation during a period of time prescribed by the healer. This is the case, for instance, of a pregnant woman who has previously experienced a stillbirth or else whose children have died consecutively after birth¹¹ (cf. *Photograph 13*). Following the healer's instructions such a woman should retreat during the whole pregnancy up to the day in which the newborn is able to come out of the enclosure walking by himself (to curtail the long duration of the seclusion, the period can eventually end when the baby starts crawling). The same procedure is also undertaken in the case of the birth of twins. Again, the mother and the newborn twins should be in confinement until the latter take their first step.

In the enclosure of the *maseku* young children alone (not yet initiated in sexual relations) can enter freely. The father of the twins, or else the husband of the pregnant woman, is allowed in only after having purified himself with a medicine (*mwon wa mu cizau*) which is placed for the purpose at the entrance of the enclosure. The few other people allowed in (such as elderly women passed child bearing age) should also apply this

¹¹ Although it is mostly women who are treated in the *maseku*, men can be also prescribed similar cure. Other illnesses, such as epilepsy for instance, require the patient to retire in the *maseku*.



Photograph 13: The maseku for a pregnant woman.

medicine.

Rules affecting those confined to the *maseku* are very strict. Twins or other newborn cannot be taken out of the enclosure under any circumstances (in the mother's absence they may be left with one of her young sisters/cousins, for instance). The mother, in turn, cannot leave the compound to go and socialize in the village although she is permitted to maintain her daily routine of going to the fields. In this case, however, she has to observe a number of prescriptions such as to avoid salutations and make use of a medicine (*mwon wa rufiish*, "medicine of aborting") prescribed by the healer whenever she comes to a crossroad or a bifurcation, when crossing a river or else when fetching water from a source.

Additional interdictions are enforced upon both parents during the period of retreat. These affect the mother more strictly than her husband and it is believed that should they be followed rigorously the children will walk more quickly, thus ending the confinement period earlier. The proscriptions include a number of foods, the cutting of the patients' hair, the act of adultery, participation in a funeral or the consumption of cooked food during the mourning prior to the burial of a deceased in the village. Rules of commensality also have to be observed and food can only be cooked by the ill woman herself and in her own personal cookware.

Once the children are old enough to walk out of the *maseku* by themselves a ceremony takes place to lift the interdictions (v.: *kujiril ku maseku*). This consists mainly in the consumption of a ritual meal (by both parents and children) which includes all the foods proscribed during confinement. All other interdictions are equally abolished and the patients' hair is then cut (the woman's for the first time since her retreat and the children's, since birth). Finally a ritual washing is undertaken. The woman who wore white clothes all through the seclusion as well as the children are to put on clean garments

and dispose of the old ones.

In relation to both fertility and funerary rites - and despite the fact that the patient is not obliged to retreat in either case - a number of interdictions, similar to those affecting one in seclusion in the *maseku*, are also enforced upon the patient. Hence on the occasion of a bereavement the deceased's close relatives (widowed spouses, orphan children or parents who have lost a child) are not allowed to eat *cooked* food¹² until they undertake a therapeutic process after the burial of the corpse¹³.

Similarly, in the fertility rite of the *atulemb*, for instance, healer and patient are not to consume cooked food until the final phase of the ritual. Then a medicine (*mbij ja mwon*) containing various kinds of meat and fish mixed with leaves and palm oil (*maany ma ngaj*) is given to the patient¹⁴ and a meal is prepared to be consumed by the ill person, the healer and other women in the audience who have once been submitted to a similar cure. Again, in the funerary ceremonies, after the ritual bath and cutting of the patients' hair which concludes the healing, it is a ceremonial meal which brings the interdictions to an end. The consumption of the meal begins, in this case, with a ritual action designated as *kusumish(v.) ruku* ("to make [someone] bite manioc dough") in which the healer introduces the patient to the first cooked food after the fast¹⁵. The healer takes

¹² During mourning only *mukank* (raw unsoaked manioc) and raw peanuts are offered to the participants.

¹³ Patients in the *maseku* and chiefs with *rukan* are equally expected to refrain from eating *cooked* food until the burial of a deceased has taken place. Unlike the close relatives of the dead person, however, chiefs can start consuming cooked food immediately after the interment without any kind of prior healing being necessary.

¹⁴ This medicine is also employed in the healing of a chief inside the *masas* (cf. *supra*:220).

¹⁵ No healing practices at all take place in the case of the death of a child in a family (*diivumu*) where one other child has already died. The parents can start eating cooked food immediately after the burial without *kusumish(v.) ruku* being performed.

a little portion of *ruku* in each hand and places inside it a piece of cooked chicken¹⁶ and a small bit of charcoal and then gives this to the patient to bite. The latter takes a bite and immediately spits it in the directions of sunset and sunrise. A similar gesture is performed by the healer who throws the remnants left in his/her hands also towards both directions¹⁷. The meal is then shared between the healer, the patient and all those present on the occasion who have previously experienced an equal loss¹⁸.

Once more, a chief's ritual of investiture parallels the structure of the healing process described above. Not unlike the seclusion in the *maseku*, in the *masas* of a chief besides the healers (*angang*) and the patient (in this case the successor to office), very few people are allowed in. In fact, only those having already been submitted to this very same ritual previously (and therefore chiefs who equally hold a *rukan*) and young children of the candidate (not yet initiated in sexual relations) can enter the confinement hut to pay a visit during the ceremony. And once more, like the patient in the *maseku*, the heir to an office must wear a white cloth wrapped around his body. In addition, all those entering the ceremonial hut are to take off their shirts and shoes. Finally, as happens also in healing sequences of other rituals, the heir is not allowed either to speak or fall asleep all through the night while undergoing treatment.

Interdictions relating to the consumption of cooked food are also enforced upon

¹⁶ Replaced by boiled egg when the deceased is the first child to die in the nuclear family (*diivumu*).

¹⁷ This same ritual theme also appears in the fertility ceremony for the spirits *atulemb* at the particular moment when the medicine *mbij ja mwon* is administered to the patient. Before the ill person is actually given it the healer (here designated by the specific name of *kalal*) will eat a little herself. She places a small portion on top of a *muyaay* (a rattle made of a small calabash with seeds inside) and makes a gesture in the direction of both sunrise and sunset. Only then does she ingest the medicine and gives it to the patient. The same gesture is repeated as the healer gives the medicine in turn to every woman in the audience who has also undergone a similar cure on a previous occasion.

¹⁸ Widows will share this meal with other widows present, orphan children with other orphan children and parents who have lost a child with other parents in similar circumstances.

the the heir to an office during the installation ceremony. These rules, however, are in the case of a chief with a *rukan* to be observed for the whole duration of his reign and, thus, are not uniquely circumscribed, as for a common patient, to a period of treatment. Following the healing and ritual washing the successor to high office undergoes, like in funerary rites, the ceremony of *kusumish(v.) ruku* which introduces the patient to his first cooked meal after the fast¹⁹. This meal takes place either in the invested chief's private kitchen (*malal*) or else inside the seclusion hut. In fact, the participants in the *masas* of a chief (much like the patients in the *maseku*) can only eat food cooked in the fire of the *masas* and, by no means, prepared elsewhere. In the case of the king's installation ceremony, it is the *kabung* entitled *Mwiin Cipet* who is in charge of performing *kusumish(v.) ruku* to the *Mwant Yaav* (cf. *supra*:220). In the kitchen of the king's palace at the Nkalaany, the *Mwiin Cipet*, here functioning as a healer, gives the *Mwant Yaav* a piece of *ruku* and meat to bite thus introducing the sovereign to his first meal inside the *malal* (which will also allow him to eat in the *malal* of the *Nswaan Murund*, the heiress of Ruwej).

The procedure for introducing a chief to eating in the *malal* is thus very similar to the ceremony which, in other rituals, brings a patient's interdictions to a close. However, while in other kinds of rites the ceremonial meal lifting the proscriptions allows a patient the free consumption of cooked food thereafter, a chief possessing a *rukan* is compelled, from his investiture onwards, to eat cooked food *forever* in seclusion (inside a *malal*) and to observe strict rules as concerns a vast number of foods.

¹⁹ The ritual action of *kusumish(v.) ruku* for a chief differs in some aspects from that carried out in funerary rites. In the installation of chiefs, for instance, no charcoal is given with the *ruku* to bite (cf. *supra*:239). It was argued to me that charcoal alludes to death in particular for it recalls a dead person in that "it no longer has fire in it". Also the remnants of the pieces bitten are thrown by the healer in any direction.

From the *masas* the successor to an office emerges, "re-borns" so to speak, with a *new* status, that of a chief/king, and in a *new* state of purity. In this sense an investiture ritual can also be seen as a ritual of birth (or re-birth). It is this aspect which will be examined next.

If used to refer to the ceremonial hut and time of seclusion of a chief during the installation ritual, the term "masas" is, curiously enough, also employed to designate the period of confinement a newborn spends in the house of delivery. The baby is "to enter the *masas*" (*kwandam ku masas*), that is to begin the period of retreat, immediately after birth and will only be allowed out of the house of birth the day after the umbilical cord has been cut. While the child is in seclusion, visitors eat and drink, day and night, in the house. People coming to welcome the newborn are not allowed to touch the baby until the midwife has washed and rubbed him²⁰ with an appropriate medicine. Also like in other situations of seclusion, the house of the newborn is protected against impurity (associated with sexual intercourse or menstrual blood) which may be carried in by someone coming from outside. For this purpose a root (one which has grown across a road) is cut and placed in the doorway used by strangers as they walk in and out.

The day after the cutting of the umbilical cord, when the *masas* of the child comes to an end, a string of cloth called *mukay* is tied around the baby's waist containing pieces of bark scrapped from the root which had been on the doorway²¹. This string is believed to give strength to the child's body and to protect him against impurity. The newborn is to wear it until the day he starts to walk. All births thus appear to follow a similar kind of procedure: twins and children born in the *maseku* are more vulnerable to impurity and

²⁰ Although this is the procedure for both male and female newborn I shall use masculine forms only to simplify the reading.

²¹ The set of these practices is designated by the verb *kukay*.

have to endure a long and more tightly ruled confinement until they begin their first steps. A normal child, not requiring such a long retreat is, nevertheless, obliged to wear the *mukay* from the moment the umbilical cord is cut until he is able to walk.

Curiously enough the term "masas", employed for both the seclusion of a chief and of a child at birth, is also used to designate the little hut built to shelter a bitch and her newborn puppies. Inside the hut a bed of leaves is made, just after the bitch has given birth, to lie the newborn. The mother will come in and out of the hut until the day the puppies are able to walk and make their way out of the *masas* by themselves. Indeed the Aruwund believe that dogs, being fed by people (unlike other domestic animals who feed themselves such as goats, chickens, etc.), behave like "children" and are therefore very close to men.

Considering the semantic scope of the term "masas" we realize therefore that the investiture of a chief, if conceptualized as a healing ceremony, is equally understood as a ritual of birth by means of which a new being is to emerge in a renewed state of purity. In fact this quality of "newness" is itself conveyed by the etymology of the word "masas" which is related to *musas* ("newness", cf. Hoover, 1976). Interestingly, the latter term is also used to mean "dawn, sunrise" and it is indeed when the sun appears in the horizon at dawn that the successor to a high office, emerging from the seclusion hut, is to become chief.

II

On *all* ritual occasions healing practices are accompanied by the chanting of songs which are believed to have therapeutic properties and are specific to the particular ceremony at stake. In the fertility ritual of the *atulemb*, for instance, the songs lament a woman's sterility while in the bereavement of a dead person chants of sorrow (*maas ya*

mushet) characterize the first part of the ritual up to the burial of the corpse. After that the songs aim at cheering the living.

In a chief's installation ceremony the songs chanted during the healing process inside the *masas* mainly contain obscenities and sexual insults and are generally designated as "songs of *ubwang*" (*maas ya ubwang*). These kind of chants - always accompanied by the playing of a small bell (*rupwambu*) - are also performed for twins on such occasions as their birth, their coming out of the *maseku* and at the monthly appearance of the new moon. At the death of a twin songs of *ubwang* replace the chants sung habitually at the mourning of a deceased.

The Aruwund make the association between chiefs and twins absolutely explicit by stating, as in other African contexts (cf. for instance Adler, 1973; Tcherkézoff, 1986:99; Roberts, 1985:30), that "twins are like chiefs". Indeed twins acquire simply by birth a status symbolically parallel to that granted to a chief on his investiture (although, politically, they are still considered the latter's subjects and should behave as such). Benefiting from this particular status, twins are buried sitting on thrones like chiefs²² (commoners lie in their graves). Also, they salute the *Mwant Yuav* as equals and can speak openly and without restraint before the sovereign. This same prerogative affects the twins' parents who see their status raised by this uncommonly fecund birth and, consequently, they also have the right of addressing the king using a freedom of speech which allows them unreserved criticism and open references to sexual matters. By virtue of this birth the *nampas* and the *sampas* (the parents of twins)²³ are said to acquire a clarity of mind matched only by that of a chief.

²² A throne is dug in the earth inside the chamber of each tomb.

²³ From *ampas* (sing.: *mpas*), "twins"; *na* and *sa* are prefixes meaning "she of/mother of" and "he of/father of", respectively. Another word for "twins" is *ampamb* (sing.: *mpamb*).

Having twins is for the Aruwund (as for so many other peoples) a reason for great joy. The Aruwund praise this blessing and the splendour of the fertility and generative capacities of the twins' parents. A praise-phrase (*nkumbu*) often uttered when referring to the *nampas* and the *sampas* (constituting verses introduced in various songs of *ubwang*) alludes to these procreative powers:

Nampas nakabwang/Sampas sakabwang
Wavaala yitot
Diikum mu karung

"*Nampas nakabwang/Sampas sakabwang* [praise-names for the mother and father of twins, respectively]
 Gave birth to hundreds
 Ten buried"

The Aruwund explain in this praise-phrase that the fecundity of twins' parents is such that even if ten died this would be hardly regrettable.

In other songs of *ubwang* it is again this extreme fertility which is essentially praised. Although these chants talk in a licentious manner of sexual matters in general (and not always making special reference to the twins' parents), the unusual capacity of the genitalia of the *nampas* and *sampas* is a particularly frequent theme as illustrated by the following two songs²⁴:

Mwimbwaal omu mujim
Twelang kupampinamu kawulaal } *bis*

Mwimbwaal omu mujim
Twelang kutunginamu kacikumbu } *bis*

"This vagina [is] big
 We would like to make a little bed inside" } *bis*

This vagina [is] big
 We would like to build a little house inside" } *bis*

²⁴ The chants of *ubwang* are quite numerous. I collected around forty different songs during my stay in the field.

T'um t'u t'urum t'um }
T'u t'urum } *bis*

Sampas t'um
T'u t'urum

Wa makutu malemp t'um
T'u t'urum

Mud ma kupat ku ciis t'um
T'u t'urum

"T'um t'u t'urum t'um }
T'u t'urum } *bis*
 [ideophone for the hitting of a hard surface (suggesting sexual intercourse)]

Sampas t'um
T'u t'urum

Of long testicles *t'um*
T'u t'urum

As for closing a doorway *t'um*
*T'u t'urum*²⁵

Although praising both parents, the songs of *ubwang* are, however, mainly centred on the woman's ability to conceive. Indeed the term "ubwang" itself, being an abstract noun derived from *kabwang*, designates the female sexual organ. The word "kabwang" is a veiled form of reference to *kabwaal*, a diminutive of *mbwaal*, "vagina". The chants designated as "songs of *ubwang*" can thus be best understood as songs of sexuality, of obscenity and it is for this reason that the twins' parents, being fertile beings *par*

²⁵ Although in songs of *ubwang* the father of twins is said to have oversized testicles, his penis is often ridiculed. This is indeed the case in the following song:

Karij kakemp kavaala ampamb, karij kakemp
Kavaala ampamb

"A little penis gave birth to twins, a little penis
 Gave birth to twins".

excellence, are addressed by the praise-names of "nakabwang" and "sakabwang", "she of *kabwang* (vagina)" and "he of *kabwang*".

When twins are born these lewd songs are chanted. From then on they will be sung every month, on the day after the appearance of the new moon, in order to keep the twins in good health. On these occasions relatives and friends gather at the house of the twins to sing and dance to the rhythmic cadence of a bell. The songs of *ubwang* are considered a medicine (*mwon*) able to heal the twins and to help their sense of hearing as well as their faculties of expression. Lack of singing can cause deafness and difficulty in conveying one's ideas (e.g. muddling of words, calling people by the wrong name, etc.).

Chants such as the following allude to the healing efficacy of these songs:

Washaalang camushaadin washaalang
Camushaadin

Nampas/sampas/mbuuy²⁶/nsaaz²⁷ camushaadin washaalang
Camushaadin

"He (or she) who stayed behind it is too bad for him, he who stayed behind
It is too bad for him (lit.: "it stays for him")

Nampas/... it is too bad for her, he (or she) who stayed behind
It is too bad for him"

If the *nampas* or the *sampas* do not join the singing "it is too bad for them", the song claims, for their children will become vulnerable to illness and they themselves will not achieve the clarity of mind and broad understanding possessed by both chiefs and the parents of twins.

At an investiture ritual songs of *ubwang* are chanted inside the *masas* (and not by the audience outside) from sunset till dawn and their main aim is to make the king (or a

²⁶ The first born of a set of twins.

²⁷ The second born of a set of twins.

chief) face things openly, without shame or shyness (*kuca ku mes wakaad ngany*, "to open the eyes without reluctance" or *kudosh usany ku mes*, "to eliminate the embarrassment from the eyes"). This is clearly formulated in one of the songs:

*Kuvaal ampamb kuca ku mes, kuvaal ampamb
Kuca ku mes*

"To bear twins [is] to open the eyes, to bear twins [is]
To open the eyes"

The Aruwund do not cease to evoke the healing properties of such songs. Just like they are believed to give strength (*usu*) and power (*ulabu*) to the newborn twins, they are to do the same for a chief. Indeed a chief - should he be the king himself or a mere *cilol* - is never to vacillate over a problem or else let any inhibition hinder his judgement. Like the twins' parents, he should speak clearly and judge affairs impartially, without regard to friends or relatives, without hesitation or shame. By exposing a nominee to lewd joking the songs of *ubwang* prepare a successor for the role of chief and, therefore, he must not under any circumstance express shyness or shame at the obscenities and insults uttered.

The singing of *ubwang* is also accompanied by unrestrained criticism. Again, any signs of anger or bashfulness exhibited by any of the participants in the ceremony inside the *masas* are received with disgust and severely criticised (a fine, *cibau*, can eventually be charged in such a case). Indeed, in the *masas* of a chief all rules concerning *usany* ("shame") are nullified. Such is even the case with the proscriptions ruling the attitudes between *akawusany* (relatives linked by an avoidance relationship). Should two participants in the *masas* hold a kinship relation of avoidance (which absolutely forbids the reference to sexual matters), all linguistic interdictions normally enforced upon them will not be applicable in these circumstances.

The association between twins and chiefs cannot acquire full meaning unless

placed within the wider framework of beliefs surrounding all children who are considered "special" in Ruwund culture. In fact, the literature dealing with the particular nature of the relationship between chiefs and twins in African contexts often does not consider the elaborate performance surrounding the birth of twins in comparison to other particular (if less conspicuous) ritual behaviour which affect - here as elsewhere - other kinds of children.

Among the Aruwund a baby whose upper incisors are the first teeth to emerge is called *ngal* (pl.: *angal*) and is considered unusual. This is indeed not the natural order of things for the lower middle incisors normally grow before the top ones²⁸. An infant whose upper teeth sprout first is considered to have singular qualities and a troublesome character. Being essentially an obstinate child, the *ngal* is believed to get into prolonged and angry silence and to be the promoter of disputes with other children. His/her²⁹ character is said to be particularly disruptive when the moon has disappeared (or is just about to rise) on which occasion the baby shows signs of distress by crying a lot (day and night some times, it is said). For this reason, as well as due to his propensity to become ill, songs of *ubwang* are chanted at every new moon for the *ngal*, just as for the twins. This is expected to heal the child and minimize his trouble. In fact, the cutting of a *ngal*'s first teeth is said to be a premonitory sign of the birth of twins and as such the songs also thank and praise the *ngal* for announcing the coming of twins. Again, songs of *ubwang* must be chanted when a man or a woman go to the fields accompanied by a *ngal*. The child should then be given some seeds to plant himself or else the field will not yield a

²⁸ The top central incisors grow one month on average after the lower ones (cf. *Nelson textbook of pediatrics*, 1992:40).

²⁹ Beliefs about these and other "special" children (whom I shall refer to below) follow the same lines regardless of whether they are male or female. To simplify the text, however, I shall use masculine forms only.

good harvest.

This set of beliefs which, among the Aruwund, surround the *angal* reappear in other cultures where they often emerge with even greater emphasis. This is the case among the lakeside Tabwa of Zaïre where these children (here called *vinkula*, sing.: *kinkula*) are believed to be sorcerers (cf. Roberts, 1991:10)³⁰. They are said "to kill by thought and voice alone" (*ibid.*:11) and as such a *kinkula* is "like a great chief" (*ibid.*). In fact, although not attributed excessive powers to the extent described for the Tabwa, the Aruwund claim that both twins and *angal* have difficult temperaments and cause disorder, particularly at birth when they can provoke the mother's sterility. In addition, twins are believed to possess in their youth³¹ both the power of healing and that of killing others by sorcery.

Among the Aruwund, as for the Tabwa, the *ngal* is considered to be like a chief. One of the songs of *ubwang* chanted for both twins and *angal* (as well as at the investiture of chiefs) makes explicit the association between these kind of children and the sovereign himself:

Ngal Mwant Yaav, ngal
Mwant Yaav } *bis*

Namuvaa mbuuy, ngal
Mwant Yaav

Namuvaa nsaaz, ngal
Mwant Yaav

Ngal
Mwant Yaav } *bis*

³⁰ It was in fact A. F. Roberts' text on the *vinkula* among the Tabwa (1991) that first inspired me to think about my own material on such children and I thank him for that.

³¹ For these powers are said to diminish as they reach adulthood.

"*Ngal* [is] *Mwant Yaav*, *ngal*
Mwant Yaav } *bis*

I give birth to *mbuuy*, *ngal*
Mwant Yaav

I give birth to *nsaaz*, *ngal*
Mwant Yaav

Ngal
Mwant Yaav" } *bis*

"The *ngal* is *Mwant Yaav*" for, like the king himself, the *ngal* is not expected to go back on a decision taken or bend to the opinion of others. Like the *Mwant Yaav* who kills and judges with no hesitation (the Aruwund often refer the cruelty of the sovereign at the time of the Lunda empire), the *ngal* is a fierce individual who acts without flinching. It is indeed this association which explains why the beaded band of the sovereign's crown is called *kabond ka ngal* ("band of the *ngal*", cf. *supra*:157-8).

One other child believed to have difficulties (*matai*) and a temperamental character is the *mujing*, a baby born with the umbilical cord wrapped around the neck. Although not taken to be a chief and considered less disruptive than the *ngal*, the *mujing* also calls for the chanting of *ubwang* on the appearance of a new moon. Of the *mujing* the songs chant:

Mujing walet mulong, *mujing*
Walet mulong } *bis*

Pol petu paading zoong zoong, *mujing*
Walet mulong

Cezaay mujing walet masok, *mujing*
Walet mulong

Mujing
Walet mulong } *bis*

"*Mujing* brings trouble, *mujing*
 Brings trouble" } *bis*

Our village was quiet, *zoong zoong* [ideophone to express
silence], *mujing*
Brings trouble

When he comes the *mujing* makes noise, *mujing*
Brings trouble

<i>Mujing</i>	}	<i>bis</i>
Brings trouble		

Like the *mujing* other special children can be evoked while chanting for twins or for a *ngal*. These other children, however, are not themselves considered troublesome and therefore do not require any particular treatment or the singing of *ubwang*. This is the case of a child born just before a set of twins (called *kalet*)³² or one born just after (*cijik*)³³ as well as children whose delivery was somehow unique and as such premonitory to the most singular of all births: the birth of twins. For example, the *ngaaril*, a child born with the face turned upwards, the *kasil*, a baby who had a breech delivery and the *cikut*³⁴, whose amniotic sac was found intact at the onset of labour, are mentioned together with twins (the *mbury* and the *nsaaz*) in the following song of *ubwang*³⁵:

Nampas wend, lel wend [*Nampas* walks, she walks]
Nampas wend, lel wend

Sampas wend, lel wend
Mbury wend, lel wend

Nampas wend, lel wend
Nsaaz wend, lel wend

³² From the verb *kulet*, "to bring", as such a child is said "to have brought" twins, that is, to have preceded them.

³³ From the verb *kujik*, "to block, to plug, to close up", for this baby "closes up" the birth of twins.

³⁴ *Cikut* is also the word for "shirt".

³⁵ Infants with birth defects or physical anomalies are not grouped with the above mentioned children who are normal despite having experienced an uncommon birth.

Nampas wend, lel wend
Kalet wend, lel wend

Nampas wend, lel wend
Mujing wend, lel wend

Nampas wend, lel wend
Ngaaril wend, lel wend

Nampas wend, lel wend
Kasil wend, lel wend

Nampas wend, lel wend
Cikut wend, lel wend

Nampas wend, lel wend
Cijik wend, lel wend

Hence twins are associated to other children whose births (or in the case of a *ngal*, whose emergence of teeth) are somehow out of the ordinary. However, while the special phenomenon of birth of other children soon falls into oblivion, the singularity of a birth of twins remains a statement for as long as they live. Hence, while twins are the greatest of chiefs, the *ngal*, whose mark of uniqueness only lasts until his lower incisors grow to match the upper ones, does not enjoy all the prerogatives of twins if proclaimed a chief. He cannot, for instance, salute the *Mwant Yaav* as an equal and, at the occasion of sharing palm wine, deserves no special deference. As for twins, they are born chiefs and will be buried like chiefs, sitting on thrones.

The recurrence of a similar ritual behaviour for all children who experience a singular birth explains the nature of the ideology which surrounds the phenomenon of twinship among the Aruwund. It is, above all, the *uniqueness* of their birth which is praised and this is re-affirmed by the even less common event of the birth of triplets.

When triplets are born the *katum*³⁶, the last of the three to be born, is considered

³⁶ From the verb *kutum*, "to send".

to be like a messenger or an envoy sent to accompany and deliver the other two (considered to be the twins) into this world. It is as though he comes only to ensure the safe birth of his siblings for, the Aruwund point out, that he often does not even survive the day of delivery. Once his task is accomplished he is ready "to return to where he came from" and this is stated to explain his propensity to die easily and for no apparent reason. The *katum* is in fact a particularly vulnerable and weak being at birth (although should he resist he is said to grow up stronger than the other two). The Aruwund believe that if not treated with great tact the *katum* will get annoyed and, consequently, life may start fading away from him. For this reason the parents should not order him around or explicitly send him off to carry out some task. At the most they might hint or refer to it in passing but it is up to the *katum* to take up the initiative or else ignore it. His twin siblings are instructed to treat him with care for fear that he might decide to let death take him over. Due to this vulnerability he should be healed, just like the other two children, by the chanting of *ubwang* at the rise of every new moon. In fact, when this extremely uncommon birth of triplets occurs, the *katum* is the one considered to be "the greatest of chiefs", higher than the twins themselves who owe him deference and respect. He is a king and, like a king, accepts orders from no mortal, his decisions being utterly irrevocable.

The Ruwund ideas concerning the *katum* leave us in no doubt that it is mainly the *singularity* of their birth which endows the twins with the special status of chiefs. As the Aruwund explain, twins are respected as high chiefs because it is astonishing (*wakukashimuk*) to give birth to two children on the same day and a startling event of that kind can only be understood with reference to special powers such as those attributed to chiefs. Within this context, the association between twins, conceived as such *exceptional*

beings, and chiefs stresses, in turn, the *uniqueness* of the sovereign's position itself³⁷. Indeed, born in the *masas* to the sound of *ubwang*, the king is a lonely, single being whose life is ruled by interdictions and whose powers, like those of twins, are excessive³⁸.

³⁷ This fits indeed with Adler's belief that the association between chiefs and twins among the Moundang of Tchad results to a great extent from the fact that both are, above all else, singular and solitary beings (*des êtres à part*) (1973:185). A comparative analysis of the ideology of twinship in African contexts is intended for later writing for in the present text it would inevitably draw the reader away from the main argument of this chapter which is the study of ritual as a "structure of rituals".

³⁸ The Ruwund example may shed some light on the long discussed meaning of Swazi *simemo* songs. Sung for both twins and other exceptional children, the songs of *ubwang* of the Aruwund praise the king as a being who, like the twins themselves, is out of the ordinary. This somehow complies with Beidelman's interpretation of the *simemo* songs (formulated against Gluckman's theory of rebellious ritual) which he sees as separating the king from his people (cf. 1966:401) and indicating the royal office as "a unique, lonely, denuded status outside any single social category" (ibid.:397).

EPILOGUE

Of Alien Kings and *Angry* Chiefs

The association between twins and chiefs was said to provide us with a means of conceptualizing the king as an irreducible and solitary being, one whose singular position within society can only be expressed by an event so extraordinary in the realm of nature as the birth of twins. The statement "the twins are chiefs", thus, allows us to think about *the singleness* of the *Mwant Yaav* (as well as that of his subject *ayilol*, as chiefs in their own settlements).

However, Ruwund thought can also be seen to claim the twinship of the *atubung*, the chiefs representing the ancestors and the order which pre-existed the foundation of the state. All linked by perpetual ties of "consanguinity" (they are all *anamaaku*, that is, siblings/cousins), the *atubung* are said to couple "like twins" in sets of two according to genealogical affinities (cf. *supra*:177) and, also like twins, they act together at all times and are utterly inseparable. The meaning conveyed by such an association between the *atubung* and twins is, however, of a different nature from that which is expressed in the statement "the twins are chiefs". Indeed, as we will come to realize, if the king is related to twins in that his status is *unique*, the *atubung* are twins for they are *multiple*.

Twins are thought of as one single body. If one is ill, the other is believed to contract the same sickness. If one dies no ritual crying (*cidil*) takes place as this would be to acknowledge the death of both and the living twin would, consequently, be overcome by grief and eventually die as well. Happiness, instead of sorrow, should be exhibited on such an occasion and songs of *ubwang* are chanted to prevent the remaining twin from dying. For this reason also twins are

immediately separated from each other at death of one of them. The living twin is not to lay eyes on the deceased for it is believed that the latter would take the former away with him/her¹. Also there should be no distinctions made or partial behaviour shown towards either twin as to differentiate one from the other. Hence on a ritual occasion when palm wine (*maruvu ma ntomb*) is drunk the twins have to be given to drink at the same time to avoid any jealousy². In fact the chants of twinship (the so-called songs of *ubwang*) claim that "the twins walk side by side/walk together" (*ampamb endang aad*)³ for they act indeed like one and the same body, one single person.

This *undifferentiation* between the two children constituting a set of twins - which leaves us with no alternative but to consider them together at all times - is also a feature of the ideology surrounding the *atubung*. Representing an ancient order where kinship seniority rather than

¹ From this point onwards only masculine forms shall be used when referring to twins in order to simplify the reading.

² Although rules affect the twins mostly when young, some prescriptions are also enforced upon them when adult. Hence on marriage of a male twin both the groom and his twin brother are to sleep the night prior to the wedding with the bride at her parents' house. The next morning the marrying twin will pay his brother to prevent him from becoming jealous. Rules of the same sort must be observed by a female twin, on her wedding, in relation to her twin sister as well as in the case of twins of opposite sex.

³ The song goes as follows:

Mbuuy endang aad, mbuuy
Endang aad

Nsaaz endang aad, nsaaz
Endang aad

Ampamb endang aad, ampamb
Endang aad

"*Mbuuy* [the first born of twins] walks side by side, *mbuuy*
Walks side by side

Nsaaz [the second of twins] walks side by side, *nsaaz*
Walks side by side

The twins walk side by side, the twins
Walk side by side".

political power was the ultimate value and where all chiefs were "equals" (cf. *supra*:122-3), the *atubung* can only be thought of within such an egalitarian ideology and, like the twins, in terms of *simultaneousness*. For this reason the Ruwund sovereign cannot request the presence of one *kabung* alone under any circumstance. They stand together and *without individual claims* for the ancestral order of Ruwej. Indeed, when parading before the king in their official visits to Musumb they state this "holistic" sort of behaviour by chanting the song of *ubwang* "wend-a-munan wa Akantaal", "the march in a group of the original people" (cf. *supra*:125). All wearing white cloths and the white feathers which evoke the original village of Ruwej, Kasal Katok, the *atubung* march stamping their walking-sticks on the ground in cadence acting out to be elderly people for they are the very representatives of the Ruwund ancestors.

The march commonly referred to as *wend-a-munan* (curiously enough also the name of a kind of mushroom which grows in clusters) obliges the *atubung* to aline in a prescribed order. The *Mwant Kayombu*, the *kabung* considered the *kalaal* of the *atubung* (cf. *supra*:187), walks in the front position while the *Mwant Rumang*, a *cilol* who is a sibling/cousin (*mpaanyend*) of Ruwej, walks at the end of the line. Like a child born just after a set of twins (called *cijik*), the *Mwant Rumang* is considered the *cijik* of the *atubung* (cf. *supra*:185) and for this reason he must walk and sit just behind them on all ritual occasions in the presence of the sovereign. With the *Mwant Kayombu* leading and the *Mwant Rumang* at the rear (no precise order is observed between the two) the *atubung* march to the cadence of the bell (*rupwambu*) which accompanies the singing of *ubwang* in all ritual occasions.

When discussing the relationship between the *atubung* and twinship it is, therefore, the "twins as a single body" rather than the singularity of these children's birth which becomes relevant as a vehicle for thinking the undifferentiation that characterizes the *atubung* and the order they represent. Twinship means here "multiplicity" and "plurality", not "uniqueness", and the *atubung* are indeed, as argued elsewhere (*supra*:125), "beings with no self", ancient chiefs of

equal ranking constituting a single category of ritual specialists with *one and the same* ritual attribution, that of performing *ubung*, that is, the set of actions leading to the investiture of the Ruwund king.

The process of foundation of the Ruwund state is, therefore, one construed as a passage from a social setting with no cleavages and based on equality as its ultimate value to one hierarchically organized and ruled by a sovereign whose position within society is in all respects unequalled. The king represents a status out of the ordinary and his oneness is expressed even in the realm of kinship for the king is, above all, *a being with no relatives*⁴. Son of Cibind Yirung, a foreign hunter and intruder in Ruwund society, the *Mwant Yaav* is condemned to the utterly peculiar condition of having no kin on his paternal side, his sole kinship ties being traced, on the maternal side alone, to Ruwej and the original people of the Nkalaany. Furthermore he is doomed to not having any brothers or sisters as his perpetual mother (*maaku*), the *Rukonkish*, is symbolically sterile and thus interdicted, from the moment she is invested with the title, from bearing offspring. The Aruwund argue that any child of the *Rukonkish* would have an immediate right to the throne.

If the old order of Ruwej and the *atubung* was founded upon kinship ties (they are all *anamaaku*), the order of the *Mwant Yaav* and of his father, Cibind Yirung, appears to install itself oblivious of links to the Ruwund people, their land or culture. The king is one without relatives, born of a stranger from beyond whom the traditions claim is ignorant of Ruwund cultural practices. In this sense power appears here, as in so many other cultures, to be born out of an "usurpation" in both senses already pointed out by M. Sahlins "in the double sense of a forceful seizure of sovereignty and a sovereign denial of the prevailing order" (1981:113).

However, we remarked elsewhere that, despite this ideological construction of "power is

⁴ Also a feature of the sovereign in other contexts (cf., for instance, Adler, 1973:184).

a barbarian" (after Sahlins, *ibid.*:112), Ruwund thought does not present the process of foundation of kingship as one of unwanted submission to a foreigner and to the principles of an alien civilization. Ruweij was totally willing to engage in such a venture. As Hoover would have it in *The seduction of Ruweij* (1978b) - and as some versions of the myth of origin of state indeed suggest (such as Dias de Carvalho's, cf. *supra*:67-8) - she openly "seduced" Cibind Yirung. Moreover, and despite Ruweij's immediate acquiescence, the Aruwund do not make of the foreign hunter their first sovereign. Kinship ties have to be forged with the Ruwund people and links with their native land created before kingship would be founded and a king proclaimed. The sovereign who inaugurates the dynasty of the *Ant Yaav* is not Cibind Yirung himself but his son, a *native* being who is able to claim unquestionable links, on the maternal side, to Ruweij and the original people of the Nkalaany. In this sense, power is not totally "a barbarian" (to recall once more Sahlins' statement) and this the Aruwund themselves affirm by praising the chief *Mukaciland* as "the saviour who redeemed the Aruwund" (*kankol wakola Aruwund*). Having given Kamong, who would conceive the first king, in marriage to Cibind Yirung, the *Mukaciland* is considered to have saved the Ruwund people from an outside rule and a foreign domination.

In this context the king is no longer a being "coming from elsewhere", as de Heusch re-asserts in a recent article (1991), for the Aruwund find grounds on which to argue *both* his alleged alieness and his filiation to Ruwund native culture (cf. *supra*:101). He who comes from elsewhere is the hunter-hero - whose yoke the Aruwund indeed escaped -, a being who has no other *raison d'être* but to allow society to think out its (new) organization (cf. *supra*:81-2) and who stresses once more, by giving the Ruwund sovereign a singular (alien) paternity, the uniqueness and utterly unpaired nature of the king's person.

I have argued before (ch.II) that the Ruwund myth of state foundation does not relate the introduction of a foreign rule within the incipient culture of Ruweij for, in that case, Cibind Yirung

would have been king and the bracelet of the Ruwund ancestors discarded as the symbol of power. Cibing Yirung, I then asserted, is a mere ideological construct allowing for the conceptualization of what is, in fact, a true "theory of society". This is a line of thinking I would like to return to, as I conclude this work, to explain finally *why the civilizing hero is a hunter*.

In his recent article *The king comes from elsewhere* de Heusch interprets the figure of the hunter in African oral traditions of state formation as expressing "a dialectic of bush space and village space" (1991:112) for, the author remarks, the founding hero is seen as "the master of the wild animals" (*ibid.*:110), that is, as a great hunter. The Ruwund material, however, makes us realize that the meaning of the hunting quality of Cibind Yirung is somehow of a different nature. Indeed he is a hunter *not because he hunts* (and for the metaphors the hunting might stand for) but because a hunter is, above all, a "wanderer", one whose origins are uncertain and whose destiny is unknown. The Aruwund call him *nkish* (cf. *supra*:47), a being whose provenance is ignored and who acts like a spirit (*mukish*). They praise him as follows:

Kambemb kamutamba diiwur
Cirumb-rumb weza palemp
Wajimbara kwezaay

"The swallow (or swift)⁵ who wanders in the sky
 The *cirumb-rumb* [one who gets easily muddled or lost] who came from
 far away
 He forgot completely where he came from"

Remarkably enough, A. F. Roberts claims that "Kakenda", a praise-name given to Mbidi Kiluwe, the Luba hunter-hero, is a probable derivative of the verb *-enda* (in the Ruwund language *kwend*, "to walk, to travel, to wander") meaning motion or "going somewhere". For the Tabwa, for instance, *gendagenda* is a "wandering star" (1991:5). Indeed hunters are essentially *errant*

⁵ *Kambemb*, the swallow or swift, is seen as a bird that flies with great speed. Curiously enough, the English term "swift" which designates any bird of the families *Apodidae* and *Hemiprocnidae* entails exactly the meaning of "quickness" and, even more curiously, that of "suddenness" (*The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 1993).

beings and, like the swallow, Cibind Yirung is a wanderer in the sense that he is itinerant, appearing out of nowhere and heading to no destiny.

My argument is that since I have considered that the Ruwund myth on the origin of kingship is a tale on society's own re-creation in which the image of the hunter-hero serves as a mere conceptual mechanism for the understanding of its renewal, Cibind Yirung requires no precise contours. In fact he is a *non-being* for he has no roots, no culture, no origin, no relatives, indeed no real identity. He is a *cirumb-rumb*, the Aruwund say, for he no longer knows where he came from. In Ruwund thought, as in the symbolic system of so many other African peoples, being a hunter-hero implies this utter undefinition. In fact this is confirmed by other contexts where the stranger hero is not characterized by hunting but is one who is, nonetheless, a "wanderer". In a Fijian myth of origin of the ruling lineage, cited by Sahlins (1981:112), the hero is an immigrant who has an accident at sea and drifts ashore carried by a shark. The stranger "wanders into the interior" and finally marries the daughter of a native female chief, this union resulting in a new chiefly line. Also, interestingly enough, the chief is defined in an Hawaiian proverb as "a shark that *travels* on land" (*ibid.*, after E.S.C. Handy and M. Pukui, *The Polynesian Family System in Ka-'u, Hawaii*, Rutland and Tokyo, 1972:129)⁶.

Cibind Yirung indeed personifies this figure of the "wanderer", coming and going without much of a trace, for he is a mere conceptual construct with no other intent but to help society conceive its own (re)organization. And, if we agree that what is at stake here is mainly a "theory of society" then we can easily understand that the king must be a native and that the *rukan*, the utter symbol of autochthony and ancestry, should be taken to be the insignia *par excellence* of the new royal order.

Ancestry remains indeed the ultimate value in Ruwund ideology of kingship (cf.

⁶ My emphasis.

supra:128-9) for it is no more and no less than the latter's own creation. It is the (newly) installed political order itself which generates for its own past an egalitarian model based on the concepts of indigenusness and ancestry (cf. *supra*:130). A similar phenomenon in a different context is explained by M. Izard in his enlightening article on the ideology of power in the Moogo kingdom of Burkina Faso. He states: "Dans l'élaboration de la relation à son passé, le pouvoir donne forme à un référent archaïque, qui est en quelque sorte son autochtonie propre" (1983:301).

Both the ancestral world and that of a new political order have thus the same *simultaneous* origin, the "archaic referent" allowing power both to conceptualize and legitimize itself. This I argued before by noting that the term *kabung*, used to designate a representative of the ancestral and local authority, means "he who performs the ritual action at a king/chief's investiture" thus implying the prior installation of kingship (cf. *ibid.*). Only then, in fact, would distinctions have faded and a homogenous group of "atubung" been conceived in order to assume an ideology of equality which kingship is seen to subverse. As the "old" rudimentary order in the midst of which power was to institute itself, the world of Ruwej and the *atubung* is, thus, a conceptualization *a posteriori*. Hence, the myth of foundation is a narration of an ideological *past*, not of a present for, as M. Izard eloquently puts it, "le pouvoir parle de tout ce qui n'est pas lui" (1983:322).

In this light, if ancestry is a value created to construe a new social organization, the *rukan*, the bracelet which is the symbol of Ruwund power, is only to become an emblem of autochthony and ancestry from the moment an "alter" is instituted and a "new" social system ideologically conceived. In such framework of thought it becomes intelligible that only after Ruwej gave her *rukan* to Cibind Yirung were identical bracelets given to the *atubung* (cf. Carvalho, 1896:664) who then, and only then, became the representatives of the *local* order. All these bracelets are perceived by the Aruwund as reproductions of one and the same *rukan*, that of Iyaal-a-Mwaaku, son of Mwaaku, the foremost Ruwund ancestor. This proliferation of *nkan* asserts the autochthonous quality of a symbol of power which is indeed a symbol of the *new* power.

By making the values of ancestry and autochthony an ideological referent, kingship will forever proclaim *duality* as the rationale underlying the Ruwund concept of sovereignty. Hence, Ruwej will always be thought of as "an independent woman", one who renounced her marriage to remain forever linked to the principles of Ruwund ancestral culture⁷. As for the *atubung*, they act within this ideological framework as though they *reluctantly* handed power over to a stranger. Their anger at losing an authority which they legitimately claim as theirs is believed to be a source of deep resentment and great hostility. The Aruwund often refer to the *atubung* as dangerous sorcerers and fear the sacred knowledge they are said to have inherited from the ancestors. The term "kabung" was indeed traced by some informants to the verb *kubungaman*, meaning "to be sad": sad and comfortless with Ruwej for having renounced power in favour of a stranger, angry at Cibind Yirung for having "unduly" seized hold of it. By creating such an ideology of the past the "newly" instituted rule will indeed have condemned the *atubung* to being forever "angry chiefs".

⁷ One of the praise-phrases for Ruwej alludes to this fact:

Nakasal Katok wayipila pa uruw
Uwaapidiin pol pend

"She of Kasal Katok who was unfortunate in her marriage
 She is better in her village"

Ruwej was to "renounce" her husband to remain in (and forever represent) her own homeland.

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